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Best of Art

Steve Tette

Nervosa

Best of Poetry

Kristin Taylor

They'll Politely Ask It Out of You

Best of Prose

Chris Beyer

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*Faculty

Soundtrack Snips and Roach Clips

Jessica Charles

July 26th 2007

7:47 am

The thick taste of the city flowed through the window of the tiny apartment. His plant project from botany sat illuminated on the window pane. Inside the one room studio he laid there fully clothed faced down on a bare mattress. He rolled his limp body off the mattress and onto the floor. For a moment he was confused. He didn't remember where he was and how he had gotten there. He stood up to find he was alone in an abandoned room with only two exits. There was a window, which had a fire escape that led to an alley below and a door which he figured led to a hallway and stairs that led to the entrance of the building. He stood there, still a bit confused, as he contemplated his every misstep from the night before. The sunlight shining through the window was blinding him and his head ached from the unruly stench that masked the room.

"Do I love you, do I lust for you?" he politely asked the plant.

He lowered his head to find his NYU duffel bag sitting at the foot of the mattress. In the distance was the sound of approaching sirens. Ian's Heart jumped and his thoughts began to panic. The crescendo of the wailing sirens blared through the streets and rang the uncertainty of what was about to happen. *Lodi dodi we like to party, we don't cause trouble we don't bother nobody.* He looked at the door behind him and the window in front of him. The mob grew closer and closer and his mind drew weary of a possible escape. In the moment he waded in anticipation the return of his unconscious predicament. The sirens were at a standstill. Ian knew he had to run. He knew he was not going to get far just casually walking out the door into the street.

"Fight the powers that be," he shouted as he jolted from his daze.

Without much time to think, he grabbed his duffel bag and plant and stumbled out the window and onto the fire escape. He quickly hurled the duffel bag into the dumpster below and shim-

mied down the escape ladder. Once Ian reached the alley he rescued his duffle bag from the dumpster and took off. Tripping over his own feet, he landed face first into a sewage filled puddle. He momentarily wiped himself clean, and peeled the waste from his face and shoes. His vision began to haze as the sewage ran down his face and over his eyes.

“Welcome to paradise,” he thought.

8:03 am

Strollin' down the street, smokin' smokin' weed, sippin' on gin and juice. Upon a group of dots, there lay an invisible line. The line traced through Ian Hafez's life like a route always leading him through the temporary treasures and continuous doubt of the world. Here he was higher than a cluster fuck of stacked clowns riding a three legged Spanish mule that smelt of cheese and oatmeal. It's been a three day excursion in a lost paradise; the longest most best-est three days he had ever had. Now he was saying good riddance to it all.

He went outside and there were cops all over. So he...cold dashed and ran around the block. He realized he was on the corner of W 125 Street and Broadway just blocks from Columbia. He glared at his watch and began to run.

8:32 am

Washington Heights

The ground beneath my feet,
behind garbage and concrete
and now the tops of buildings
I can see them too.

Ian Hafez is a 7th year senior at NYU majoring in the numbers game of business. His parents insisted that was his future, and plus it gave him the enjoyment of deciding where he wanted to go to school: New York City. He was an international student from Iran and on the verge of self destruction with his balls to the wall habits and his rebellious nature that his parents called “The American Devil” syndrome. At this point he really didn't care what his

business was in Washington Heights. Besides he had smoked the finest kush, snorted the whitest coke, tasted the sweetest acid money could buy and wanted to enjoy the last of his sweet escape. He was going to run it off. With the wind to his back he ran.

New York...concrete jungle where dreams are made of, there's nothing you can't do, when you're in New York. He decided he was much better off to take his journey on foot. He felt the darkness and the cramped capacity of the subway would drown his remaining flare. It was a straight shot down Broadway and he would much rather see the sites of New York City.

Yo Mona Lisa, could I get a date on Friday, and if you busy, I would mind takin' Saturday...Round up the posse, Fugee comin' around the way. The streets were crawling with tourists, gays, nut jobs, hoes, and hoboes. The rest were just clones of their former selves who, like many, took the Atlantic passage of false hopes to become a superstar. Ian became a part of that grand design, but he considered himself quite orderly more than the Blow Joes he wandered the streets with.

"Lets keep all nuts with the nuts so I don't get an aftermath." He said with a narc smirk on his face.

9:16 am

Central Park

Here we go yo, here we go yo. Say what what so what's the scenario.

He came to a brisk walk, being he had someplace to be, he wasn't in much of a hurry, but he knew he had to make it. His head was to the sky and hands were in the pocket of his cargo shorts that revealed his knobby, ashy, Paki knees and spider monkey toes. He veered off the route down easy street and made a left onto W 110th Street leading him to the commotion filled Central Park. To his amazement, he had stumbled into the running route of the annual Central Park Triathlon. There were people lining Park South Drive and he drunkenly became road kill to the sweaty pack of meat heads and the spandex butt eaters running their last laps. *Road runner; road runner; going hundred miles per hour; with your radio*

on. He kindly joined the race. He was running; he was running with the very best of them. In their midst he could only think that he had already won this race.

You can't touch this...

I told you home boy...

You cant touch this...

"I win, I win," he teased as he jetted pass the terribly exhausted athletes.

Picture yourself in a boat on a river with tangerine trees and marmalade skies. He was sailing through the magical forest he had known so well these past years he had been there. Of the dealers disguised as squirrels hustling in tree trunks, rapist stalking from rose bushes, to the midnight make out sex session on the park bench, he was on top of his world. Oh, how he enjoyed Lucy, with her blue eyes and if the sun hit them at a certain angle they really did look like diamonds. Lucy was his American beauty. Don't be mistaken by the drugs. Lucy was a real girl. Ian's parents would never approve, for they had wives already lined up for the choosing. She was naïve as the bleach blonde hair upon her head and the butterfly tattoo on the crack of her ass. Oh she's only seventeen. She was one of the many that have flocked to his expense. According to his charming dark eyes and handsome dark complexion, he was a prince, a tall Persian prince.

Could you be loved...?

Is this love, is this love, is this love that I'm feeling...?

9:48 am

Columbus Circle

Mama may have, papa may have, but god bless the child that's got his own.

He longed for that day of independence. Money, you've got lots of friends. And he enjoyed every moment he had in it. Empty pockets never make the grade. This city was his playground. Fuck the forty virgins and give him the forty, forty club with ESPN on the screen. He dreamed of his own Trump Tower He was going to

be at the top be stock market king. He was all about the Benjamins baby!

10:00 am

Time Square

Give him *Good Morning America*, BET, TRL, The Naked Cowboy, Bubba Gump, and Starbucks out the fuckin' wazoo. *BLING, BLING*, every time he came around the city *BLING, BLING*. These were the very streets that taught him to do the smurf, *do the wop, baseball bate, roof top like I'm bringing '88 back...word to your moms, I came to drop...bombs* (well that part he had to just keep to himself).

He had already passed the World Trade Center a while back and could stand the memories it seemed to fester. He could never bear to actually look at it, but he knew it was there. That very moment in history, changed his very existence. *Stick em up, stick em up Jimmy*. Ignorance was occasionally thought as just in this place.

Next time don't listen to your mate Annie.

You know she likes to lie...

You know she likes to lie...

Darlin', darlin'...

I got standards; she filled my name with such slander...

Let just say, he lost a lot more than just his face value, he was stripped of his own integrity for the longest time, and has yet to regain the stability he had fostered in any shoes.

"Say it ain't so..." he sighed.

10: 31 am

Somebody's Heiney is crowing my ice box,

Somebody's cold one is giving me chills.

Somalia, Angola, Ghana, Ghana, Ghana,

India , Sri Lanka, it's a bamboo banga.

Bono this, Bono that, but Bono know Jack cuz bo cant rap.

It was a jungle of the masses. The excess was thrilling and it carved the very meat on his bones and put the stretch in his skin.

Interstate 65 headin' down to Cashville

*Glass filled, to the tippy-top, back-seat Benz
Spent my last cent on the rent, left with pocket lint
A damn shame, gotta grind anythang and everythang
Jimmy Crack Corn, cross the county line with Mary Jane.*

10:45

Washington Square, NYU

Kimosabe...jump on it, apache...jump on it! It was a sight to see. The square was filled with reminiscing emotion and glowed with camera flashes and the proud applause that escalated into cheers. Ian rustled his cap and gown out of his duffle bag, smoked a last joint before making his way through the sea of people in black.

As we go on, we remember, all the times we had together...

"blah blah blah..." he thought.

He managed to take his place amongst friends, foes, drama filled sluts, retards, fellow pot heads, oh yea, and the anorexic/bulimic Olsen twin that he had only seen once until that day. For the last time, he would walk the walk of a foreigner. And finally for the first time he realized he had become instilled in a culture to which he was alienated from.

11:00 am

*Come follow me to the land of Abraham,
this land is your land, this land is my land.
Heaven...I'm in heaven...and my heart beats so that
I can't hardly speak...*

11:09

"I am Hafes,"

"What the fuck," he thought. "That's not my name, that's not my name."

He removed his head phones from his ears, wiped the disgusted look off his face, and headed for the stage. During the brief walk, as he wave to the people in the stands and flipped birds to his professors he thought to himself:

[Role Credits]

Special thanks to:

Slick Rick

Jay Z

The Beatles

De La Soul

Tribe Called Quest

Green Day

Louis Armstrong

Nappy Roots

Kings of Leon

Nas

Lupe Fiasco

Billie Holiday

Snoop Dog

Vampire Weekend

The Fugees

Weezer

MIA

Kid British

MC Hammer

Vitamin C

And so on....

But a special, special thanks to my lucky NYC roach clip for
keeping my nail beds clean and my home grown kush burning real
mean for the team.

If I ruled the world

Imagine that...

I'd free all my sons, I love em love em baby

Black diamonds and pearls

Could it be, if you could

Be mine, we'd both shine

If I ruled the world

Still living for today, in

these last days and times

[applause]

Writer's Paradise

Emma Estrella



Not that I really care, but

Meghan Doll

Last week,
I wrote our names
Very tiny,
But in Sharpie,
Amongst the nihilism of
A bookstore copy
Of War & Peace.

I thought, as I wrote, that
One day someone might find us,
And wonder if we were
The real characters.
But, by then, I
Might not know you anymore.

I went back to that
Bookstore today,
And panicked because
I couldn't find us
Scribbled on a single page
Of that endless tome.

We didn't belong with aristocrats
or fit in with the Russian army.
We weren't found anywhere in
frigid St. Petersburg or Moscow.

Then I remembered that
There are several copies
Of our book in that store,

Yet “we” were only in
one of them. So,

After an hour and
One sharpie, I marked
Through Pierre and Natasha
To make room for our names,
In hopes that someday
You might make it
To the epilogue

And find us.

Paused

Erick Richman

between the brewing sand and sinking air
the sun-ravaged desert collapses ahead,
spilling into the limping, self-worn sky,
flattening between them
the epicentered oasis – consciousness –
which paused, before leaving in a flurried rush
of silence.

Meanwhile in the same spot,
my burial service goes well.

Nervosa

Kristin Taylor

I stopped eating when he could no longer touch me,
swore only he would touch my lips.
First I let go of my morning rituals,
then lunch, dinner.
By the time I could slip jeans with
fastened buttons and still-lodged zipper teeth
over my pubescent hips,
I no longer fasted for him. I saw him as he was:
hands slimy from spoilt, spilt masturbatory seed.
Instead, I fasted for those other girls—
my golden idols with hips like Scandinavia's gnarly fingers,
rib cages blossoming second pairs of knobbly breasts—
who could also slip their bodies, like bone sacks, into size twos.

Silence and Slow Time

Kristin Taylor

I lost you the first time I touched you.
When my hands quivered above your face,
I hesitated to close the meager space that kept
my fingerprints from your perfect clay.
When I touched you, I saw you with my hands—
like playing piano with my eyes closed;
your very breath was music.
You told me later that you were my Pygmalion;
I smoothed your imperfections,
loved most what I had created in you.
I long to restore you now to your former beauty,
to leave my hand suspended in its quivering
moment of quietness, to uninfect the smudge.

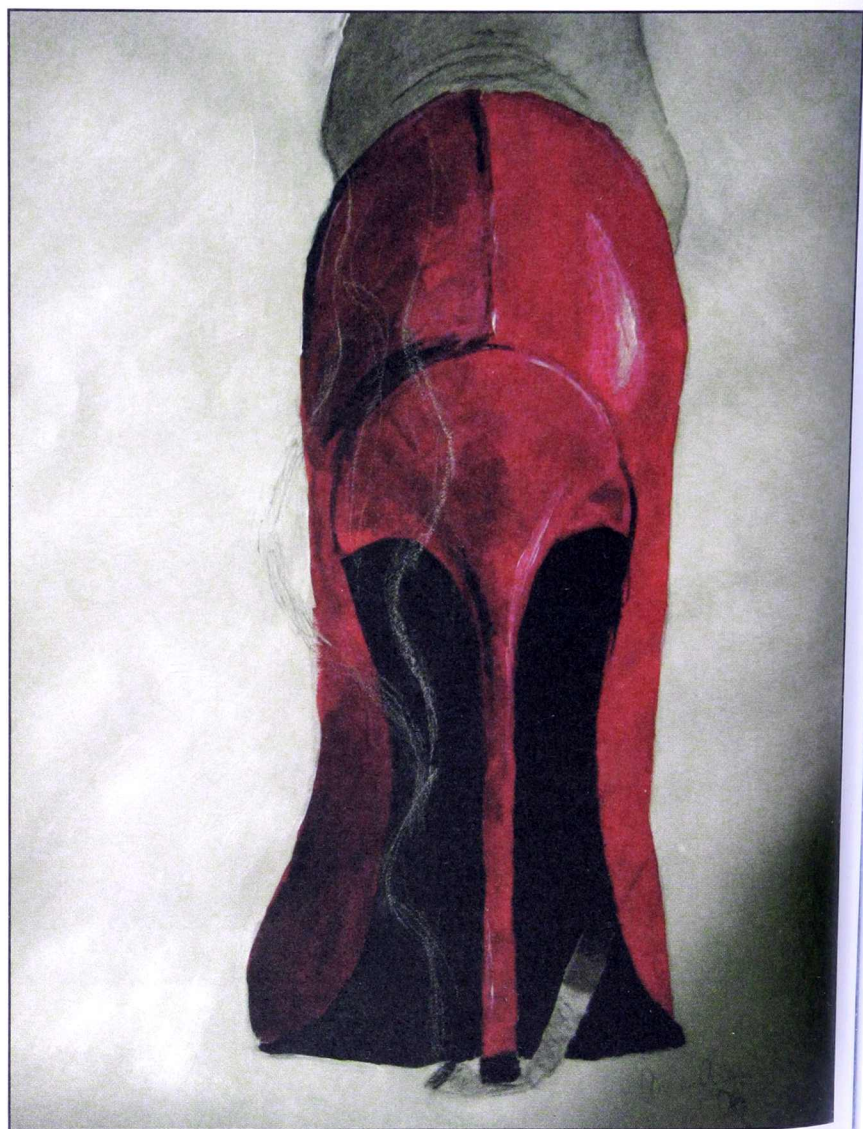
Wild Irish Rose

Steve Tette



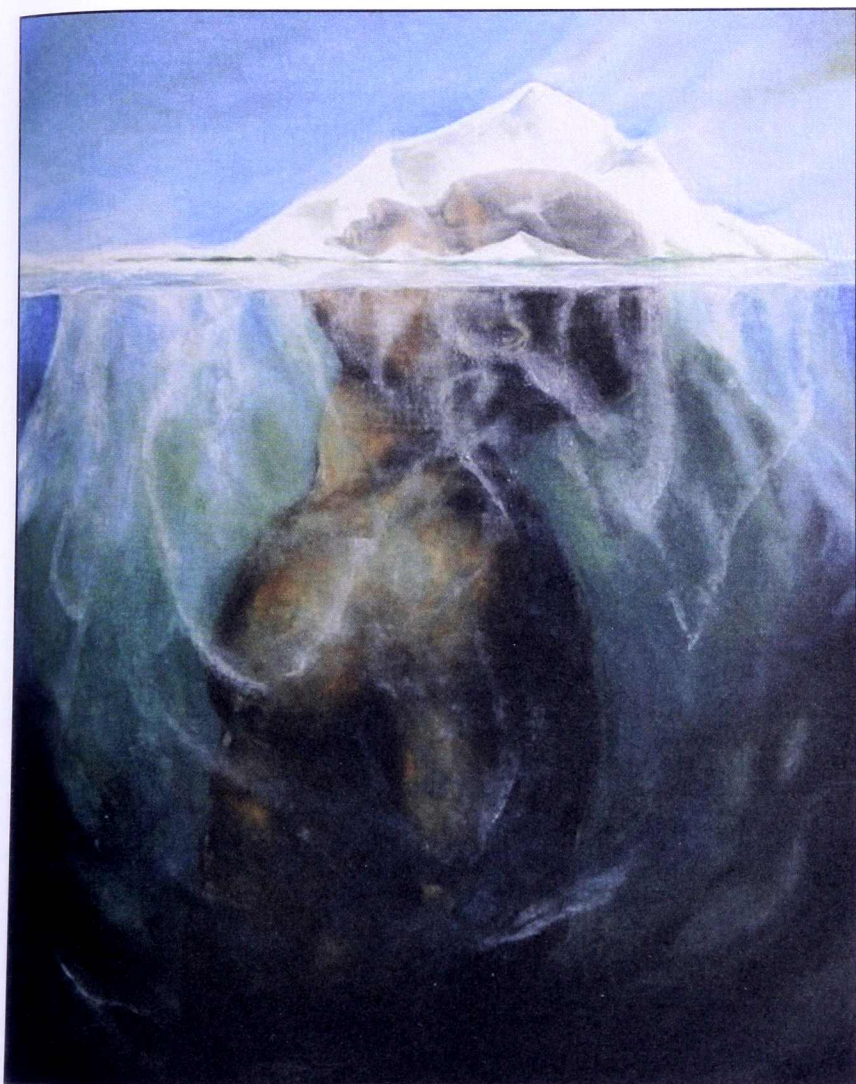
Habits

Anna Alder



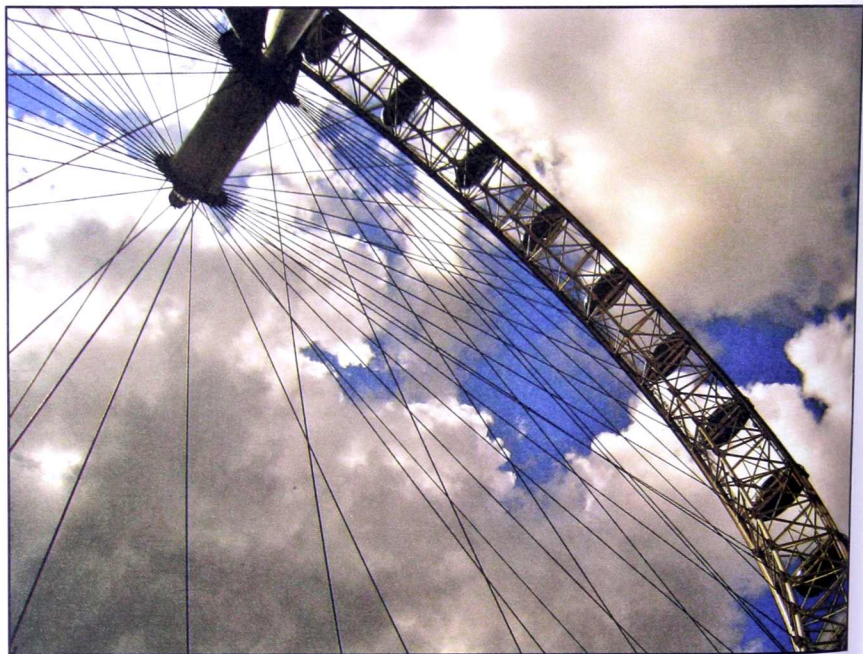
Untitled

Steve Tette



The Eye

Kristin Taylor



Laugh Out Loud

Renae Friedley



The Gaze

Kristin Taylor



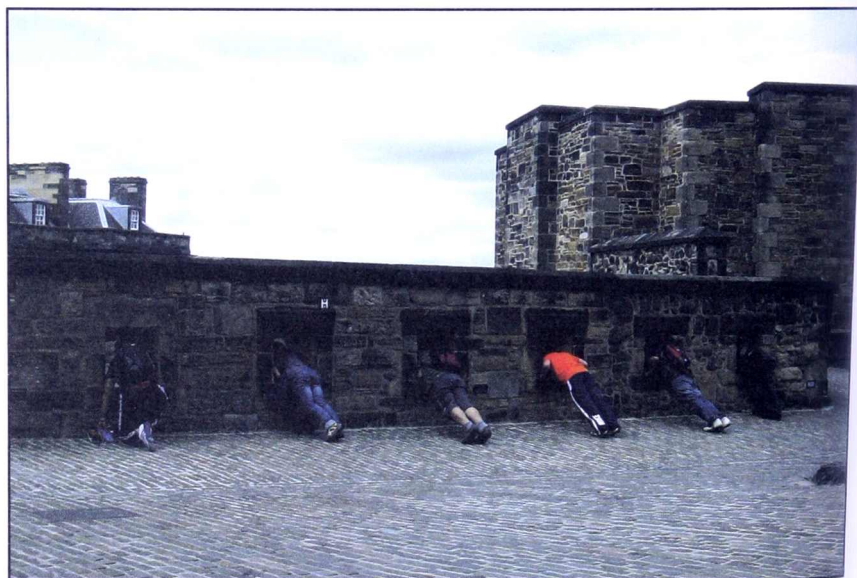
The Station

Brooke Cosby



The View

Brooke Cosby



A Sudden Blow

Kristin Taylor

*A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead.*

*Being so caught up,
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?
—W. B. Yeats, from “Leda and the Swan”*

*Thus, the most common trauma of women remains confined to
the sphere of private life, without formal recognition or restitution
from the community. There is no public monument for rape
survivors.*

—Judith Herman, from Trauma and Recovery

The night he came in, I nearly died. Everything after that has been an image of him – the merciless aftermath of coming to understand what he meant when he said, “One day you’ll wish I’d just killed you.” Then he left. I’ll never know if he was there fifteen minutes or five hours. They say the mind does funny things in times like those, in times when some stranger has entered your house to enter you. I never pressed charges, too afraid he might come back and undo his words, finish me off anyway. But lately, I’m beginning to wonder if that might have been an easier way to go. Quicker. A single gunshot. Like the feel of his loins firing inside me.

Sometimes I think it’s all his tiny sperm that later became the cancer – like maybe they sat in me until they started to eat me away, organ by organ, breath by breath. At night I lie in my bed, the same bed where he held the gun to my head and told me to take off my clothes, and wonder how many minutes I have left. Then

I see him on top of me again, and I think the countdown must be something like staring above you trying to count those damn sheet-rock drops that look like zits on the ceiling or trying to count the number of times the fan buzzes round and round – anything but the number of seconds he has been shoving himself between your legs.

I still replay that moment when I suddenly woke up, and there he was, standing over me like the feeling of guilt before confession. They always say the woman wants it – like somewhere in me I had enough power to will the stars of the universe to align so that he could rattle my doorknob on the exact night I forgot to turn the deadbolt latch and fell into bed after working a sixteen-hour shift at the restaurant. And after a while, you begin to believe them. Not that I'd know who "them" is. No. Because I've never told anybody. But I still hear their voices. The ones who speak on the six-o'clock news, barely audible. But they're still there, whispering to some other victim that she wanted it, blaming her and blaming me all in the same breath. They speak in that split-second flinch before they voice that awful word – that shameful word that tries so hard in four letters to get at what some man did to her, did to me. Then they shove her story away in the time it takes the fan to buzz round twice. They let the dead victims of murder live longer in the dull light of the flickering screen. But I remember them, the others who are like me. I keep their stories in a shoebox beneath my bed, right between the folder that contains my positive cancer screening and a box of my mother's old knickknacks.

The doctors keep telling me I only have six months left. It's so funny – not haha funny, but ironic funny – to think that cancer cells are killing you where new life is supposed to grow. I mean, they could have been pulling a baby out of me, rather than tearing out my insides – letting an infant cry with his first taste of air, rather than letting that putrid, malignant sack of uterus sit on a sterile tray in the corner of the operating room. They took my chance at the baby boy I always wanted and the cancer all at the same time. Or so they thought. Three months later, they said the cancer had

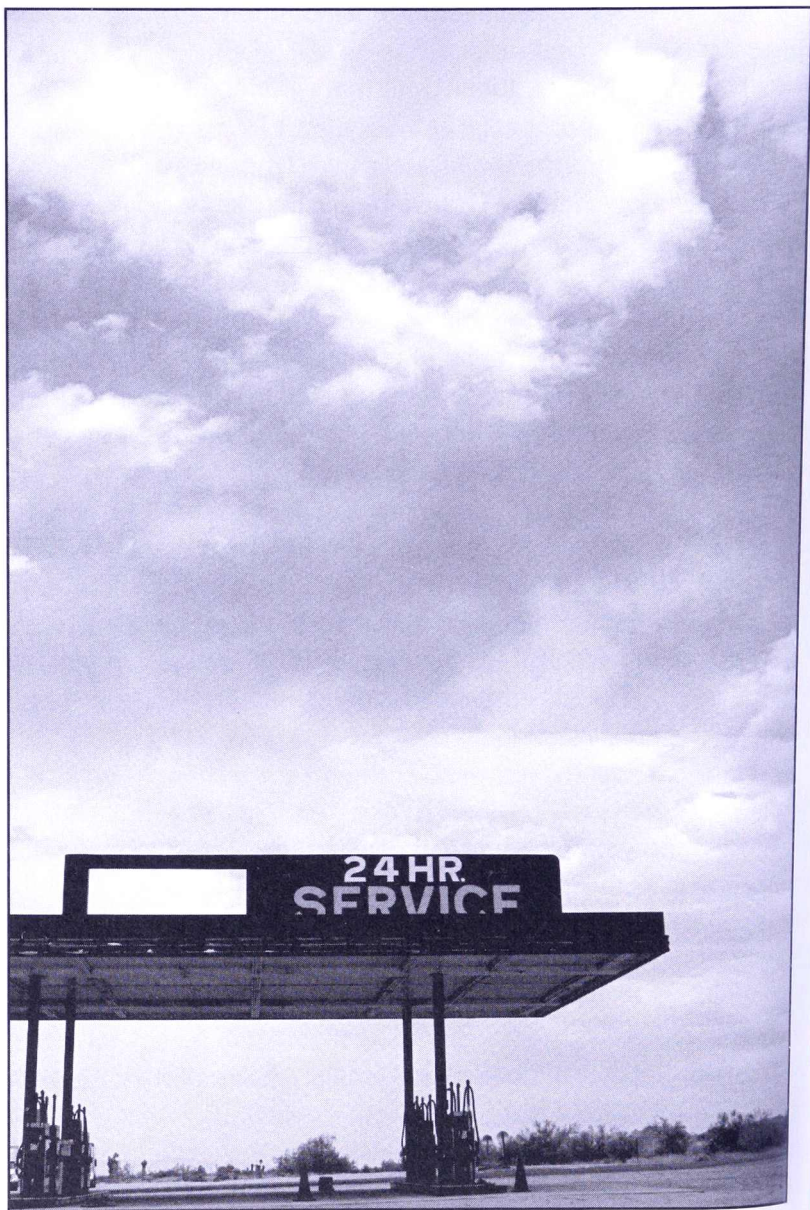
continued to spread. And now my life has become has become the loss of one dispensable organ after another, has become measured in chemo treatments and the number of victims I can save from the newspaper before the cancer takes me. But no one, not even God, can save me.

I lost him that night, too – God, that is. Not all at once, though. First it was in the moments when I couldn't love my neighbor as myself. Because maybe the faceless man from that night was my neighbor. Because maybe I drove by his house everyday, and he was watching me suffer, laughing over his victory. Then it was in the moments when I couldn't forgive. Because how do you forgive someone who takes that much from you? And then it was in the moments when God had – or rather, didn't have, as I know now – a master plan and that somewhere in the middle of it, that man smothering me with all his heavy weight would work out for the greater good. Then it was in the moments when the watery blood started pouring from me and the jabbing pains of an invisible knife came closer and closer to where he shoved himself inside. And now God lives somewhere between the second I felt the cold gun barrel against my temple and the second I finally heard the front door latch with him on the other side, deadbolt still unturned. After God, the things I lost became as uncountable as the zits on the ceiling.

I often pull out the shoebox, trying to see if the others lost those things too – what it feels like to think you're safe, that your body is your own, that your voice will be heard, that anything can be explained with words. But you never really have any of those things. No, the difference between who you were and who you become is the difference between believing those things exist and knowing they don't – because this is what he takes from you: the moment before disillusionment. The moment before you realize you left the door unlocked, before the doctor breaks the news, before you wish he'd just killed you. Quicker. A single gunshot. Like the feel of his loins firing inside.

Middle of Nowhere, Texas

Emma Estrella



Canis Fides

Shannon Taft

Does the common beast think beyond the instinctive search for necessity? Is there something more on its mind than food, shelter, and sleep? Something more than basic survival? The cycle of the natural life seems to beg the question: 'Does the soul-life encompass all living things, or just all animate creatures? Or is it perhaps reserved for the mortal, intelligent species only? Quite a lot can pass through a mind while enjoying a sunny Tuesday afternoon from the inconspicuous park bench view. Man and Man's best friend—side by side. Or, in this special case, Dog and Dog's best friend, enjoying the comfort of each other's company in the waning hours of a slow day. What else do old, tired dogs and old, re-tired people have to do? Chase money? That ended twenty-five years ago. Work some mediocre job for the heck of it? All his life. He was fed up with work. It was time to let the Federal Government take care of expenses for a while. How about go back to school? It would be free for him—money-wise. But not time-wise. Then why not take a vacation? Every day is a vacation now. The aged, speckled beagle lay on the bench, tail hanging over the arm rest. His legs were half-curved underneath his frail body.

I could feel his heart beating. A steady thump...thump...thump kept tune with time, almost. He was old, but so was I. No one was ever a closer friend to me—testimony to the old adage: Man is Dog's best friend. He was frail and weak, yet he had walked with me every day for the past twelve years. He had a certain drive and resolve I have not seen in any other like him. Then again, I have never known another companion besides him. We were faithful to each other. Sometimes I swear he knew what I was thinking at any random moment. But I like friends like that. I knew when he wanted to go for a walk; he knew when I was ready to hit the sack for the night. Our lives seemed to be following the same track. What was the purpose of our lives? I couldn't tell you, because I

really don't know. I never took the time to think about it. Just go and do. Just Be.

Does that mean our lives had no meaning? Were our goals in life aimless? That depends on the value placed on life—all life. I love life—regardless of its value. Every living thing is worth something. Maybe the worth of our lives was strictly dependent on the other. Maybe the only purpose of my life, now, was to be there for him, and he for me. Once again, Man is Dog's best friend. At this stage in life, existence centers around your friends. He didn't have any friends; he had no family; he was just a creature to many people. Many, many people. So perhaps my goal in life was to be there for him, as he was for me. Now that I think about it, I couldn't live without him, really. He was tame and civilized. Sophisticated, you might say. Tame and civilized beings can't survive in the wild. They need to be amongst other tame and civilized friends; but that's easier said than done. This is still a dog-eat-dog world.

His heart was still beating. It was fainter, but I could feel the pulse. He was awful thin; some of his bones could be felt through his wrinkled skin, but that's just the downside of again. His breathing was shallow, like mine, but at least he was breathing. What more do you need for life? At least a short life. What was that? My ears laid flat. I turned my head to look behind the bench. Some dark stench invaded our private space. Our own little world. I had keen senses—more than others my age. At least that what he told me. Sometimes, when he walked with me, he would most likely say, 'You got a good sense of hearing' or 'your eyes are sharp today' or 'Do you smell that?' it's always good to encourage others. The feeling suddenly became darker. It was a beautiful day: people walking, kids playing, birds singing...it had all the grace of a Tuesday. There were skyscrapers in the distance; smoke on the horizon loomed like an eerie omen of the future; hustle and bustle in the streets, and not just cars either. Hordes of people were at every street corner—waiting to cross. And stray dogs here and

there, running down alleys and sniffing trash cans. I hated those dogs—so uncivilized and rough. No class. No manners. But there were also short end delivery trucks and taxi cabs. Oh, lots of yellow taxi cabs!

But something was still wrong. Something, or someone, was near me and my sleeping friend. I knew he was sleeping—he hadn't gone just yet. I could feel a pulse. I could feel the rising and falling of his stomach. But his breathing was different. Worse different. I couldn't hear it now—it was too shallow. I knew he was breathing because I could feel the rising and falling of his stomach. Besides, he was still warm. A little colder lately, but not enough for anyone to notice, except for me. I opened my eyes only briefly. He was closer. There was nobody behind me, but my senses told me he was breathing down my neck. And that of my companion's.

Hmmm. Companion. Companionship. Camaraderie. Albeit, he was more like my right arm than just a companion. Twelve years I've had him...and I've never known him to be mean and vicious. He was always gentle and docile. Maybe a little too gentle. At least he seemed that way when I first found him. It was outside a pound-like place on the edge of the city. I say "pound-like" because it wasn't like any normal pound. At least none I've ever been in. he was cold and depressed; he had the look of broken spirits. So, I went over to him and rubbed against his head. Then he sat up, with a surprised look on his filthy face. So I cleaned his face. Before I knew it, I was going home with him.

Then it happened. It was just like walking from a muggy, miserable summer day into a cool, refreshing pool...so he was gone. I couldn't feel his breathing anymore. I should know, after twelve years. He wasn't warm either, he was quickly losing temperature. I wanted to snuggle closer with him, but I didn't have the strength. I couldn't feel a pulse—not even a faint one. No one in the park, or walking by on the sidewalk, or driving a mere few meters away noticed his passing. They don't pay attention to stuff like that

anymore. Life is all hustle and bustle—not all caring and sharing. A breeze whisked through the overhanging oak branches, as if transporting his soul to a brighter, better place. But do dogs have souls? Why are dogs trainable? Because they hope to get treats for good behavior. They hope to win the favor of their masters. They hope. And isn't the soul centered on hope? Or does it lean more towards faith? Yet, aren't hope and faith two different views on the same concept?

Now my breathing was slowly ceasing. My eyes wouldn't open anymore—I couldn't muster the strength...or at least I didn't have the resolve. My friend of twelve long years had already gone minutes earlier. I wanted to go with him—to follow him and see where he had gone. Maybe he had seen a white light at the end of a tunnel, like some people believe. Would I see one also? I was waiting...for the right moment...to jump off the ledge of here and now, called life, into beyond...just a few moments more...NOW! I leapt. It was all dark. Pitch black. No special sights—not beyond life, at least not for me. Was it the same for my friend? I didn't know, he was nowhere near. No tunnels. No light. Just a black end. So I guess...maybe I don't have a soul? Maybe hope and faith aren't the same thing. But I don't know how to have faith... I'm just a dog.

Sunbathers

Renaë Friedley



[Soft-Serve Coward]

John Summerfield

You're an ice cream cone

Delicious, cool, and sweet –

But after the fun, you melt and run

At the slightest hint of heat.

Tea Time

Julie Barrett

We stayed up all night.

Hours after work, until our tea was cold.

We kept talking as the waitresses fell asleep,

and we sailed away in our corner booth-

Only you and I.

And it was there that I saw you,

and what I saw scared me in a way that made me smile.

I saw you,

-seeing me

thoughts in the lakes district, England

Emma Estrella

this is the kind of weather
where thoughts gather
at the corners of my heart
like frost
on ancient windowpanes.

the seasons blend---
greens and golds,
reds and blues
patchwork themselves
as if they belong to each other---
today i could wander
farther than my feet
could take me.
i'll put some wear
into boots
that have not trod
any depths of experience.
i wish i could walk
fast enough,
so time would lag behind
and allow me just one
pure hour
to understand
all that lies within my sight.

raindrops make music
in the turning leaves
the pitter-patter
of footsteps

as this moment
slowly
slips away.

the trees beg to be explained---
because only they,
colors entwined
on branches of able wood,
stand
with the knowledge
wrought by many years
of existing
and plunging roots down
into the uncertain ground
of life.

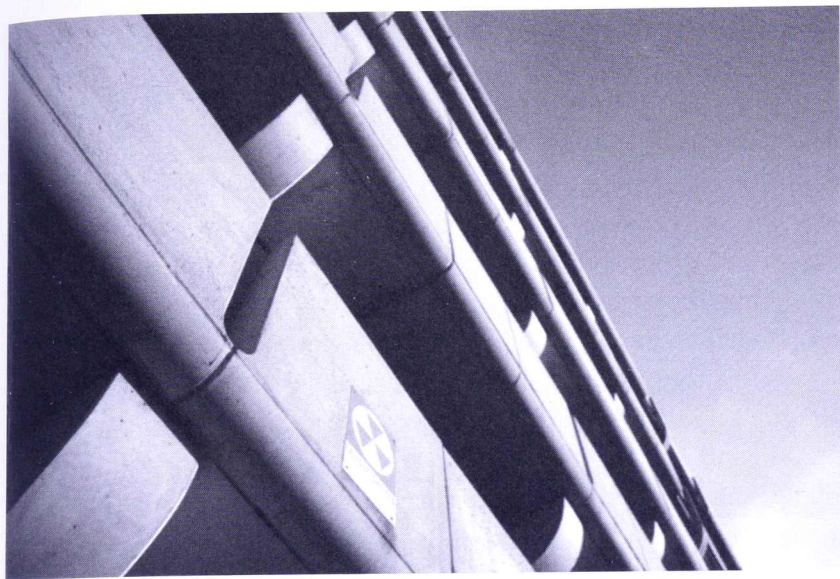
Waiting for Sushi

Kristin Taylor

As I sit across from you,
I search our silence for
a way to undo the twenty
minutes of our undoing.
I look for you
in wilted lettuce leaves
in a puddle of ginger dressing
in an off-white salad bowl.
I make the mandible and maxillary
of chopstick jaws move
apart and together and apart: a nervous fidget.
We hear the sound of wood meeting wood,
but more the moment afterward
of air—like tendon separating bone.

Untitled

Matt Farina



Millard Duke: A Son of a Bitch

Nancy Moore

Millard Duke wasn't your ordinary, run-of-the mill kind of dog. Nobody would have mistaken him for one of those pedigree dogs that are on World Championship type shows ...you know, the ones that come on TV in the spring. Those dogs look like they went to the beauty parlor before they came to the tryouts or whatever, and their kinfolks are better known than most humans. Maybe you, too, have seen those shows where the trainer sprints around the ring with the dog, but you catch yourself watching the lady trainer more than the dog because she looks like a person who would associate with a dog more often than another human.

Evidently it's a stylish affair because we (the TV watchers) are already told that these canines have papers to prove their heritage (and I can't even find my birth certificate.) But anyway, those trainers are always dressed for the occasion; the men often wear tuxedos and such, but it's the lady trainers I find interesting. She's always spiffed up on the top of her outfit with lots of lace and sometimes she's even wearing a long gown, but she always wears those orthopedic type shoes so she can keep up with little Pom-pompadore as he struts his stuff in front of the judges.

Anyway, Millard Duke wasn't a pedigree of anything, that's for sure. Still, he wasn't the other kind of dog either. This other kind of dog is what I'd call your everyday, normal, cat-hating, butt-sniffing family dog. This kind of dog doesn't have a pedigree either, and he's not perfect looking like that fancy Pompompadore.

This normal kind of dog is generally ignored by the family but patted routinely.

He doesn't have any real jobs to do, so he simply eats a lot, sleeps a lot, barks a lot, and fornicates when the opportunity avails itself.

Although he is an accepted member of the family, he usually has one or two characteristics that are a little off base. Nothing

seriously wrong, mind you, but some physical trait that makes that particular dog “special.” Now, that’s not “special” in the way the show dog is special, but it’s closer to the way Forrest Gump was special. For example, he may have one ear that stands up while the other ear falls down or he might be a wee bit cross-eyed. I even had a dog one time that had one blue eye and one brown eye. Or the dog might seem to be in a bad need of braces because his bottom jaw juts out from his top jaw; this is usually seen in those prissy little dogs that old ladies own. They (the old ladies, not the prissy dogs) often put pink ribbons in the dog’s ponytail on top of its head.

Still, for all these dogs’ irregularities, each one of them seems to possess at least one really outstanding characteristic. Oscar, the dog I had with one brown eye and one blue eye did, without a doubt, have one of the most beautiful brown eyes I’ve ever seen on a dog. He also had one of the most beautiful blue eyes, too. Other positive characteristics of the normal type dog may be that he can bark eight straight hours and not lose his voice at all or he is really good about jumping in the back of your pickup truck when you go pick up the mail. And he’ll stay in the back of the pickup until you tell him to get out ... even when you make other stops at the Feed and Seed or drive through the McDonald’s.

No, Millard Duke was not like either spectrum of dogs. That is, he didn’t have a pedigree or papers to prove his heritage as far as I could tell. I didn’t buy him and no one gave him to me as a gift. He just kind of appeared and I knew he wasn’t valuable because one time I left him outside the Feed and Seed resting under the shade of the porch. After paying my bill, I walked or drove around all day long. Even went home for dinner with the wife. When I passed by that evening there was Millard Duke in the exact same position I’d left him that morning. I’d thought he’d already wandered away by now or even considered that someone might have stolen him. No such luck.

Remember a while back, I said that the everyday dog may have several physical flaws but usually has at least one and maybe several outstandingly good characteristics. Millard Duke was different. He had a multitude of physical flaws and absolutely zero redeeming, good characteristics.

Now I've lived for 75 years on this here earth and I've had a heap of dogs in my life. After realizing these facts about dogs and the fact that Millard Duke was virtually good for nothing, I began to study on the situation for a while. I figured that since the good Lord made him, Millard Duke must have at least one good characteristic and a purpose in life. I thought I'd discover that characteristic if I just took the time needed to find out. So week after week I went on doing my business but keeping an eye on Millard Duke. The fact is, the dog was even too lazy to get off the porch to relieve himself. Emma couldn't stand it and said what would people say when they came on the porch to sit down in a rocking chair for a sociable visit only to have to step across a steady stream of dog urine running downhill off our porch.

One day Emma and me were headed for the church even though it was a Tuesday night. You see we were having a revival and since we had a guest pastor who was talking and no one really wanted to feed him and his 300 pound wife by themselves ... anyway, someone decided that the best thing to do was to have a church supper so everyone would have to share in the work and the misery. As I was saying, we were headed out of the house and Emma was carrying her baked ham that was still warm and smelled heavenly. She'd put pineapple slices on the outside with those little cherries inside the pineapple circle. You know, kind of fancied it up for all the other ladies to see. I was carrying the drop biscuits that are light as a feather. You'd think I'd be carrying the ham myself instead of Emma, but ever since our mule Della kicked me when I was trying to put the harness on her, my leg gives out a lot of the time - usually when I least expect it.

I'm sorry. I get off track sometimes. Drives Emma crazy.

Anyway, she had just moved off the last step and was heading for the car when the ham must have kind of shifted weight. Whatever happened, that ham slid off the platter, just as fast as you can say SPLAT! Juice, pineapple rings, cherries, and all! And that's when it happened.

Quick as can be, Millard jumped up off the porch and made a beeline for that ham; gobbled every last piece but the bone and with slobber dripping down the sides of his mouth he even commenced to lickin' the juice out of the sand. When Emma got over her amazement, she began to tune up and cry and, of course, I had to comfort her. We still had the biscuits to take, but I was really looking forward to wrapping one of her biscuits around some of that ham. However, it's at that very moment I realized that Millard Duke was good for something or at least good at something. He could eat faster than any dog I'd ever seen!

After we got in the car, I shared this newfound information with Emma. I was so excited but Emma didn't seem too happy about the whole event. Well, time passed and the revival continued. We spent the entire week listening to the most boring, skinniest man on the face of the earth talk abundantly about nothing but how we were going to all burn in hell, and all the time I kept thinking that compared to listening to him, hell didn't sound half bad. When I wasn't thinking about that, I thought about Millard Duke and looked at the skinny preacher's bovine wife. By Friday night I figured if him and his wife were headed for Glory, I'd just as soon go to hell.

Summer commenced and the days got hotter and hotter, and I still thought about what a good eater Millard Duke was. Why, that dog would eat anything. I've seen him eat squash and tomatoes as I brought them in the house from the garden. Of course, I had to take the squash and tomatoes directly to him and set them by his face. But what he really loved was meat or anything to do with meat. One time Emma had me take some meat grease out to the field and dump it because she said it was getting rancid.

As soon as I poured that grease, Millard Duke rose up, his big nose in the air, and went straight for the meat grease. Ate every bite. Only trouble was that he had the squirts for several days but that at least kept him off the porch and made Emma happy.

Toward the end of the summer, my brother Edgar came to visit from Roberta. He brought one of his bitch hounds with him. He had in mind to sell or breed Trixy to some fine breed of stud. The only problem was that he didn't want to pay any money for a stud fee. As soon as his dusty pickup rounded the corner in our front yard, Millard Duke must have caught her scent because he was up off the porch in a flash. He was jumping up and down around Edgar's pickup bed that had a cage with Trixy in it. If I didn't know better, I would have believed Millard Duke thought Trixy was another ham.

Edgar was curious about Millard Duke and wanted to know about his pedigree and what all I knew about his bloodline. I kind of avoided answering him but said that Millard Duke had a lot of energy and any pup he fathered probably would have that same kind of energy, as well. Besides, because Edgar was my brother, I wouldn't charge a stud fee. That right there sold him and it wasn't five minutes after we let Trixy out of the cage that old Millard had done the deed, so to speak. Hot Dog! I'd discovered one more thing that Millard was good for and could do really well and fast.

I was right proud of Millard Duke but if he didn't have something to eat or someone to screw...well, you know what I mean. Anyway, if he didn't have those two things to do or get done, he just stayed flopped in one position on the porch, still peeing downhill and drooling while he slept. Finally my Emma put her foot down.

She said he was nasty and useless as well as ugly. I tried hard as I could to convince her of his two redeeming points, but they didn't impress her at all. She'd made up her mind. Either Millard Duke went or she was going to leave. After a lot of consideration, I realized Millard Duke had to be the choice to go.

She give me that ultimatum on a Sunday, and Monday morning I started my search for someone to take Millard Duke and kind of love and admire him the way I'd come to do. I must have gone to fifty folks and they all wanted to know about papers or what all he could do. The two things I mentioned didn't seem to help at all. The next week was important because Emma had given me only two weeks to "get rid of THAT dog." So this week had to work. The problem was that too many people already knew about Millard Duke. I mean, some people like Emma's nosey friend Bernice Brewer had been visiting before and seen the pee stream as she and Emma sat right beside him drinking lemonade. Emma told me that Bernice immediately stopped drinking the lemonade; she may have noticed the similarities between her drink and Millard's "offering." Bernice told Emma it was purely unsanitary to have that "thing" around. Imagine. Calling my dog a "thing."

Anyway, the old biddy went and spread the story all over town till no one, and I mean no one, would even entertain the idea of adopting Millard Duke.

I was at my wits' end. Didn't know what to do. So, I did what I do when I'm confused. You think I'm going to say that I go to church. Wrong. Preacher skinny had ruined me on church. I loaded Millard Duke, grabbed my cane pole and a can of worms, and headed off to Blue Springs pond.

I'd planned on just wetting my hook a little and having some time to ponder. I had exhausted all the possibilities of getting rid of Millard Duke and was even entertaining the idea of killing him myself. But I just couldn't do that. I agree that Emma was right. Millard Duke did nothing much but laid around and drooled and ate except when he was chasing the lady dogs. Yet somehow Millard Duke reminded me of me in my prime. Oh, I wasn't much to look at, but I always had a healthy appetite and, after me and Emma got married, I was a real hound dog about what you got to do after you got married.

Well, I was pretty low when me and Millard got out of the

truck and I took the poles and stuff and sat down on the bank to fish. It was only then that I heard someone speak to me. "Afternoon, Mr. Will. I see you got a fine dog with you there." I almost slipped off the rock into the pond. Not because I was surprised someone was there and talking to me but because that someone turned out to be a neighbor named Joe Hamp and he was speaking of Millard Duke in a most complimentary manner. Maybe Bernice hadn't had time to get to him with her big-mouthed rumors. I, too, greeted Joe and offered to share my can of Vienna sausage and crackers with him if he'd just scoot closer to me and my fine dog.

Joe scooted over and gradually began to rub Millard Duke and even gave his half of the Viennas to the dog. I told Joe all about Millard's pedigree and how he could tree any coon during the night or even the day. I don't know what happened to me, but I just couldn't stop telling lies; told Joe that Millard Duke'd stay in a truck all day if you wanted him to and that he was the best watchdog ever created. I told that good man all those lies until I made myself sick. I was disgusted with not being able to get rid of Millard Duke, but I was even sicker of hearing myself lie.

Finally Joe told me that he'd been looking for a dog kind of like Millard Duke but he'd never be able to afford a dog as fine as I had described, one with papers and all. That's when I started backtracking ... some call it crab-walking. Anyway, I couldn't stand myself any longer. If I had to take Millard Duke to the pound myself, I wasn't going to do this big talk any longer; so I told Joe Hamp the total truth. I told him that Millard Duke had only two things he absolutely loved to do and he did them well, indeed. He would eat any and everything as fast as he could get it and he loved the lady dogs. What I actually said, since Joe Hamp was another man, was that "Millard Duke loves, absolutely loves feeding and fucking."

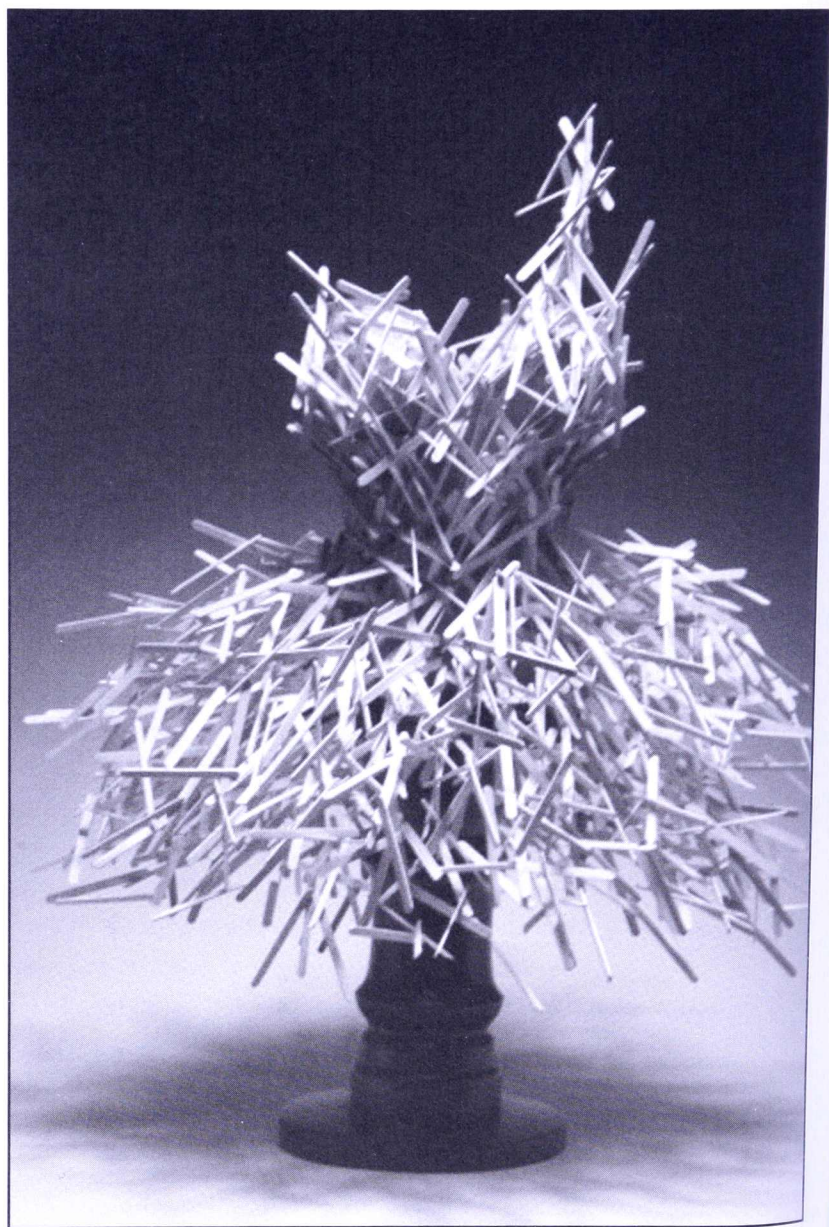
At first I thought I didn't know how Joe took this, but I saw a smile come across his face. I knew he had lots of hound dogs up in Whipper's Quarter where he lived. Joe commenced to explain

to me that he had a brother who worked at the dog food plant down in Lizella and his brother gave him all the feed in damaged bags, so food was no problem. On top of that, he (Joe) had been looking for a good stud for his bitch dogs. He kind of eased up and quietly asked in a halting way, "You think, Mr. Will, that I could have your Millard Duke? I'd feed him real good and you've got to know he'd be happy as a pig in slop with all those females that need tending to."

It didn't take a minute for us to shake on it and Millard Duke was more than happy to go with Joe since Joe had given him food. I handed Millard Duke over to Joe and got in the pickup and left. On the way home I realized that maybe I did, after all, get something out of those sermons way back during our revival. At that very moment I realized "God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to behold." That quote from the Bible was just as true for dogs as it was for people. Every human being's got one or two good things about him and it was the same thing about Millard Duke; it just took a little while to figure out what they were.

Sculpture - Popsicle Sticks

Nica Mendoza



A Night Stand

Bryn Pipes

First a puddle,
Then a pool.
Shadows shift
In the flickering light,
And if those whispers of wind allow
There will come a flood.
Tilt it one way.
Tilt it the next.
Form patterns
And shapes
Of smooth texture.
Warm air lifts perfume
To soothe
And tempt
And heal me.
Mind relaxes,
Muscles loosen,
Breathing becomes easier.
And with a puff:
Darkness.

Absolution

Julie Barrett

She sat in the light she knew was morning.
It was soft and secret, spilling forth sleepily with prideful
deliberation-
It glinted off the slivers of a shattered locket.
It happened in a lingering moment.
A broken clasp, a quick slip,
The familiar delicate prism slammed into the unforgiving tile
of her bare floor.
Shattering in a glistening, tinkling, glorious wonder
The crystal shards and rainbow slivers scattered before her.
As the pink and blue winks of sunlight glinted off the crystal,
She watched it break.
A moment of pure brilliance was one of lasting damage.
And so she sat there in the drowsy trickle of the sunrise,
Savoring the feel of broken glass against her fingertips.

Becoming

Kristin Taylor

My shrink said to me,
you used to be small,
would hunch yourself
over in the chair,
trying to deny the
space of your body,
your body its space.

You sit differently now, he tells me.
I observe myself, the space of my
legs extended, torso straight and long;
a voice that resonates in my belly
spills forth to fill the room.

[Autumn & Poetry]

Gwendolyn Labod

dawn emerges from the womb of the horizon.
infancy is roused by the onslaught of a breeze.
verdant soldiers prepare to engage in a
sole battle. once budding cadets, now matured
admirals are stationed to fight a predicted loss.

cowardly some try to hold on to a life,
denying the amber truth of a death foreseen.
Wind's presence is felt over the hill, armed
with steel to take the vitality of cravens
and heroes alike without discrimination.

fiery rebellion swells in the nucleus
awakening to the casus belli of the canary.
soldiers gather in number leaving behind
innocence. they are unripe to the common purpose.
now besieged with nipping inevitability they ready.

blood spills with the slaughter of the first front.
a rushing of Wind silences with splintering precision.
champagne's last breath is taken defiantly
wine is brought forth from the root of nature and
Winter's apathy, an annual massacre.

dust sweeps the battlefield as fallen soldiers
lay upon the frozen ground. burnt faces gaze
heavenward as smoke rises. bodies are piled
together, pushed from the world without tribute,
sacrificing themselves for those ungrateful.

The Endless River

(inspired by "High Hopes" on The Division Bell album of Pink Floyd)

John Summerfield

Where it starts it ends and where it ends it starts
rolling over our mindless feet, bare
with existence and wondering to and fro
uncomfortable
shifting as we weave
and scribble our words in sand
drifting like the wind that unfurls the leaf of the crysalis, and
forces the beautiful butterfly to be born earlier, and
die sooner.

Explosions

Emma Estrella

every good love story has an explosion.
whether it's your heart
or that roadside bomb,
doesn't matter.
just as long as
you end up in pieces.
every good love story has an explosion,
whether it's your heart
or the meth lab in the basement,
doesn't matter.
just as long as you've got the scars
that tell us how serious
you really are.

War and Pizza

Erick Richman

The oven bellows
out landslides of dough, over
killer tons of cheese that seeth and sublimate,
like lava, into crimson chasms and desolate flats.
Pepperoni artillery whiz past,
scorching, screaming
over fields of fetid feta and rancid ranch,
clinging to trenches of sausage soldiers, ground beef bombs,
and shells of bacon flak – that fall like hail
on the clean, empty peace of the table.
Sching – sings the blade,
as they meet.

Homecoming

Emma Estrella

i love to find your feet
with my feet in the dark
after we have made love
and your body has grown
soft in sleep, while i lay
next to you, cold, awake,
with my poets brain
composing a love song
to your feet.

your hard and warm feet that
have walked a whole earth and
at last returned to me
unbroken.

your symphonic snoring
colors the once dull night;
every loud breath a stroke
painting the portrait of
my relief.

i cannot think of it,
of all that came before.
to think that only one
step to the right or left
would bring your feet back cold
and silence the color
in your chest.

A New Way to Enjoy Honeysuckles

Matt Deen

I used to pull the green-tipped stem
Slowly from its sleeve,
Eager to find the other end:
One bead, or two, or three.

But now, tie-clad and starving,
I tear the petals all the way down
And hope (this time at last)
To drown.

Inheritance

Jon Sanderson

He was six feet in the ground before I
took my first step. I held the legacy
of a grandfather I never met. Smooth

carved wood stained burnt sienna for the bowl,
the narrow shank slender and circular,
the black stem leading to the well worn bit

eroded by tobacco breath, moist lips.
I kept Grandpa's pipe with me four whole years,
but time saw that it should perish with my

era. That day it crumbled in my hands.
The only remains were the cooked ashes.
Its pungent tang dissolved, rising up to heaven.

La Cucharacha No Puede Caminar

Erick Richman

If only I were better at bringing death,
my home would be safe.

If only I could smash
without remorse
the skulls of my enemies,
rip their joints to ends,
tear their sinews to tissue paper,
and with my unarmored feet,
grind their skeletons to anthracite dust.

Victory, if only I did not,
while wielding a broom madmanly as a knightly axe
wish for the weakest second to miss,
my war would have been won long ago.

Last week I finally gave in and laced the house with poison bait.
I wasn't sure it worked.
Until I found one sprawling face-up
on the stone-cold-linoleum floor,
legs kicking like an Olympic swimmer,
loaded down with cement shoes,
struggling to survive.

letter to myself

Emma Estrella

you aren't listening for me yet, i suppose.
you,
who are divided from me by
an esoteric valley of time.
you are standing at one peak
and i at the other
and between us lies the darkness that we have
navigated together to become who we are.
you are at the innocent end, trembling and white
at the beginning of the world,
and i at the other, wearing all the emblems of age,
would explain to you the mysteries
but that would only float you towards me on a cloud of ignorance.
i'll only tell you that it's dirty in that valley,
you have to dig with your hands in the raw earth
and with trembling breaths prevail upon mountains
that stand in your way.
but then...
there are also meadows.

Loose Change

Wyolene Solomon

When all the dollar bills are gone
we reach down in the bottom of our purses
and gather loose change.

We reach down in our minds and chit chat
of words, fragments, statements, quotations,
from books last read. Bits and pieces come
a little at a time. Loose change.

We reach down in our purses and come up with
a pocketbook or loose words, fragments, statements,
quotations from books of yester year.

Shirley Ann and I always have loose words
and sometimes loose change.

My Grandmother's Relics

Kristin Taylor

nail polish bottle,
half-empty,
contents separated from disuse,
a pink as cold as flesh

tangled necklaces and earring
half-pairs—like Excalibur to
Bedivere when his hands
trembled above the water

her youngest daughter's baby
book, scribbled invocations
of lost teeth, of a goldfish
named Buddy, buried at sea

photos of strangers' faces:
memories that follow her,
one by one,
into the forgetful earth

rare bread

Emma Estrella

something in me longs for the everything that you are;
i want to fill up the nothing between your fingers,
with the absolutes of my affection.
i want to untie your fears and fly them unhindered
like flags of victory.
i want to stretch you out across the universe and lie back
admiring your constellations.
you're a flicker of light across shadows,
you're a mountain stronger than steel,
a book that keeps on intriguing,
a blade that never grows dull.
such are you, my dear, that rare bread,
that satisfies.

Classic Literature and Children: Developing a Love Affair with Ichabod

Jennifer Wood

I have three young children that love to read and to be read to. Because I am passionate about literature, I want to instill in them the love that I have for the classics. Since they are young, however, I have started them on “childrenized” versions of these classics. Someone once said to me that her concern with starting with these versions for children was that they would “take the easy way out” and would not read the originals when they were old enough. I have pondered that statement for some time, and I would respectfully have to disagree with her. Naturally all children and all stories are different, but it is my belief that based on the three questions of “What” (What is the best way to teach a child?), “When” (when is the best time to introduce classic literature?) and “How” (How should this literature be introduced?), we will discover that those who begin with “childrenized” versions, can love these stories so much, that they will desire to read the original texts when they are older.

Let us start at the beginning with our first question: “What.” What is the most effective way to foster a love of classic literature in children, or in other words, how do they learn? “Children learn through repetition [...] a young child’s brain is “wired” to encourage repetition of sounds, patterns or experiences that provide security, and thus develop strong neural pathways in the brain that become the highways of learning. Such repetition is good for your children and a practical, easy approach to helping your child’s growth and learning” (Brotherson). A baby learns to speak, walk, play, etc, by hearing and seeing these activities demonstrated for them all day, every day. A child who is spoken to in a conversational manner is much more likely to speak clearly and will build a greater vocabulary. For instance, when a mother takes her infant to the grocery store, by asking him which can of beans is the best

price or by talking about what type of steak Daddy likes, she is building language skills and teaching him. Even if he can not voice it yet, or show his recognition, he is still absorbing the interaction and the sounds that he is hearing; he is learning through this repeated activity. Southerners have an aspect of their system of manners that they are taught from birth, through repetition. They are taught to say "yes, mam" and "no, mam." How many times have you heard this conversation, or perhaps you have even been a part of it? Mom says, "Sarah?" Sarah answers, "What?" (then the training comes in.) Mom says, "Mam" (in that "I'm sure you meant to say it, but have forgotten" tone of voice) and then waits for Sarah to respond with the appropriate "mam." Mom then proceeds to ask the original question. This transaction happens repeatedly until young Sarah begins to answer with "mam" without even thinking; she is being taught through repetition.

Now that the "What" question is answered, the next one to tackle is "When." When should we start introducing these classic stories? The answer is, as soon as possible. We should begin telling our children stories even before they can understand them. We are taught to read to them before they can speak, some even suggest reading to them while they are in the womb. Not only are we building language skills, we are also building a love of stories. Long before they can understand the story, they understand being snuggled up with Mom or Dad, with undivided attention for the fifteen minutes that it takes to read the Little Golden Book, and in this time, they begin to love books. They love the colors and the feel of the pages and the sounds of Daddy's voice as he makes the wicked queen sound scary. They learn this even before they can speak or read for themselves. As they grow, their love for stories will grow, and they will desire and will be able to comprehend more sophisticated stories.

It is at this point, when they are young, that we should begin to introduce them to the classics. We, as a society, do not give children enough credit for what they will be interested in or for what they can understand. Our society has succumbed to the idea that kids only want Sponge Bob and Hannah Montana, so we do

not offer the “meat” of stories, or even offer books at all, we offer XBOX and Wii! Even when we decide to begin to introduce classic literature, we wait until late middle school or high school. Sadly, if we wait until then, it is often too late. A typical teenager, while intellectually ready for traditional versions of these great works, has lost the joy and the magic of learning something new, of peering into another culture or discovering new ideas. For the most part, typical teenage years are about clothes, friends and the opposite sex. The time to introduce these new and wonderful stories is while these children are young and vibrant and eager to discover new ideas, not in high school, when they are thinking, “Just please don’t let me be different or think differently than everyone else.” The when of introducing great literature is immediately, if not sooner!

We have two questions down, “What” And “When,” and one to go. The third question of “How” is much more involved because we do it for the rest of the child’s life. Obviously a very young child will not sit and listen to, or be able to understand these complex stories in their pure forms, so we have to make them child friendly. First we tell her paraphrased versions, then we read to her from a “childrenized” version, then she can read the children’s version for herself. During this time we can introduce movies, audio books, act out the stories with her Barbies or toys, and before long, our little one has grown to love the story.

In order to have a better understanding of this process of cultivating a lifetime love affair between children and classic literature, let us look at how a specific work can be infused into a child’s heart for a lifetime. We will use “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” by Washington Irving, and for the sake of personalization, we will apply this story to the life of a little girl named Rachel.

Rachel’s family welcomes her into the world with all of the joy, anticipation and sleepless nights that accompany the birth of a new child. She grows, Mom takes her to the grocery store and talks to her about beans and steak, she snuggles up with her and reads endless stories, and she marvels as Rachel begins to speak. Mom tells her stories of anything that Rachel loves, anything that will

mystify and excite her developing brain. Rachel begins to become more sophisticated in her language, so Mom switches to paraphrases of stories she likes as well as the ones that Rachel likes. Mom might begin by telling her a love story about a man named Ichabod Crane, who loves a young girl named Katrina. Rachel is only about 3 or 4 years of age, so she is not able to understand or absorb much of the details of the story, but she can certainly understand a love story, after all, little girls love a fairytale romance. Rachel begins to play with her teddy bears and stuffed dogs, naming them Katrina and Ichabod (she thinks Ichabod sounds funny, so this name certainly sticks with her). When Daddy comes home from work, Rachel tells him the story.

She starts kindergarten and has developed an intense love of books, so Mom moves her to the next level of Irving's story. She reads it to her from a Walt Disney collection. Rachel is fascinated with Ichabod's funny nose and his crazy clothes and the way he rides his horse. She also realizes that Ichabod plays with the children, "But after school he was the companion and playmate of the children, and would even walk some of the smaller ones home" (Geis 119). Now he is not only funny, but he is someone that might play with her if he were real, she likes this idea. She spends endless nights sitting in her bed, flipping through the pages and looking at the pictures, she thinks Ichabod looks so funny on that horse. She does not even know it, but while she is laying in her bed giggling, she is building a love affair with literature. Weeks pass, it is Halloween day and Mom wants to introduce little Rachel to the next level of "Sleepy Hollow," so she surprises her with a copy of the Walt Disney movie. Rachel watches it over and over. She delights in the way Ichabod comes to life, and the way he looks even funnier riding his horse than she had even imagined. She is also fascinated with the scariness of the story. Disney does a fine job of creating a dark and eerie mood, "Brom Bones [...] becomes a menacing demon on his wild midnight chase after the terrified school-teacher. In those scenes he is a match for any of the most fiendish Disney villains. The dark scarlets, fierce purples, and livid magentas of the Headless Horseman chase scenes raise the

emotional pitch” (Geis 132). Disney chose his colors with purpose, and this purpose serves to further deepen the love of stories and literature in young minds. Rachel can’t get enough of her new movie, and watches it over and over. Now she has experienced Ichabod and Katrina with all of her senses and they are engrained into her as much as anything else in her developing identity.

Years pass and along the way Rachel has continued her fascination with Ichabod, Katrina, Brom and the Headless Horsemen. She has certainly had plenty of reinforcement from other mediums. Every couple of years a new variation on the classic by Irving is created, even a 1976 Scooby-Doo version, “The Headless Horseman of Halloween,” set in Sleepy Hollow at Crane Manor, complete with a ‘legend’ that the great-great grandfather, Ichabod Crane, had been chased by a headless horseman (“Headless...”).

During these passing years, when Rachel is about fifteen years old, she encounters another version of Sleepy Hollow. Until this point, in Rachel’s mind, Ichabod has always been, “tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it might have been mistaken for a weathercock perched upon his spindle neck” (Irving 967). To her, he has always been a funny, endearing, bumbling character. However, Rachel is a teenager now, and she is acutely aware of the opposite sex; her mind is on boys, clothes, and friends. We would not normally think that this is the perfect time for furthering her love of literature, but in her hormonal teenage state, she is perfectly primed to encounter the next level of her journey with Ichabod Crane - the 1999 Tim Burton version (*Sleepy Hollow*). In his version, Ichabod is not cast as the typical gangly, crazy looking character that we have come to expect. Burton casts Johnny Depp as his Ichabod Crane. Ordinarily we would not imagine that a man twice named People’s Sexiest Man Alive and whose face hangs on the walls of millions of girls, would be the first pick for Ichabod Crane, but in the mind of Tim Burton, all realities are turned

up-side down. In an interview Depp said, "My initial idea was that we could go with some prosthetics and do a snipe nose [...] Tim, in fact, was very smart in thinking that we didn't need it" (Depp "Reflections"). "We felt like, rather than go to the extreme [...] that we could just let it happen in the character" (Burton "Reflections"). Burton wanted to go against the norm (imagine that), so he chose to keep Depp as a normal man. Most of the female population would agree that there is nothing "normal" about Johnny Depp's look. Naturally Rachel agrees and is thrilled to see Sleepy Hollow on that Halloween night with some girlfriends. She laughs at his outlandish behavior, "He hits like a girl, he throws like a girl, and he acts - as far as I can tell - like a thirteen-year-old girl" (Burton 177), juxtaposed against his insanely beautiful face, and she feels a connection to Ichabod. She does not realize it, but she is furthering her love of literature, even while she dreams of Johnny Depp.

Rachel's life continues, with the seeds of literature already planted, watered and growing madly. She is older now and has obtained the vocabulary to read some of the classics for herself. She has seen, read and heard of stories of Sleepy Hollow since birth, and she realizes that she doesn't know which ones are real and which are not. She is curious so she goes to her local bookstore looking for the answers to her questions. She finds a book on short stories by Washington Irving, buys it and snuggles in with a cup of hot tea, to find out the truth about her old friends, Ichabod, Katrina and the Headless Horseman. She loves the story, she feels she is discovering a mystery about someone that she knows and loves. She has come full circle.

Finally, our three questions of What, When, and How, are answered. But there is still the obvious question, my friend's original question: Will a child take the time to read the classics if she has read a "childrenized" version of the story? To my friend I say a hearty "Yes!" It is true that some may take the easy road and they will miss out on the joys that await them within the pages of the original works. However, if Rachel's story is indicative of others, literature will become a part of the person they will become, and they will love and even perpetuate it. We said that the seeds of

literature were planted, watered and growing madly within Rachel. We will see this perpetuation when she marries and has children; the forest of literature that has grown throughout her life, will reproduce when she shares her love with her children. The circle of literature in that family line will not soon be broken.

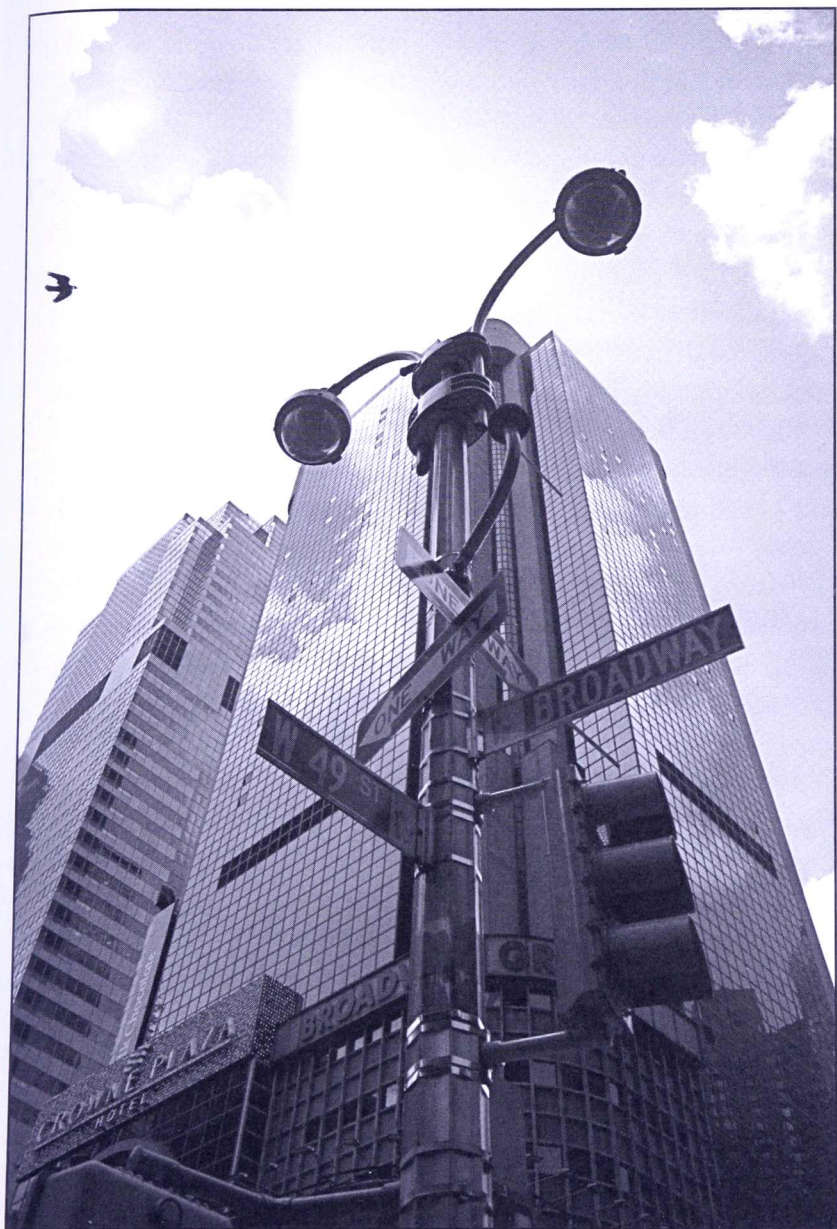
So I say, start early. These classics will carry forward and help to shape our children into more sophisticated, well-rounded, and cultured adults. They may forget momentarily about these great works in high school - I'm sure they will - but at least they will already know and love them. And when they figure out that they can be individuals again (or when they encounter a classic remade with Johnny Depp in the lead!), the love of the stories they learned as children will return.

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Look Up!

Emma Estrella



Untitled

Sara Whitley

No one ever mentions the tree top that crushed his skull, the freak accident that took him away from us forever. People talk about his brilliance, his sparkle, his personality, his talents. They talk about the void that now exists where he should have been. They talk about the opportunities he should have had, about the tragedy that exists in the world not getting a chance to know this rising star.

I talk about chess games, and a presentation where he made everyone laugh even though my performance was dry and awkward. I talk about a joy for living, and how I regret not getting the chance to know him better. I don't talk about our fight. I don't mention that the last time I saw him I told him I wished he was dead. They don't need to hear this. They want the sparkle. I want the sparkle.

My left arm is wrapped over the shoulder of my best friend, his girlfriend. I never knew. She's wearing his ring and the look on her face seems as if she'll never be physically capable of a smile ever again. She never told me. She takes more of the Kleenex I brought for her and cries and cries and cries. I try to comfort her for the loss of the boyfriend I didn't know existed.

My right hand is resting on the knee of my other closest friend. My darker friend. She was his best friend. I worry she'll start cutting again, but for right now she's content to fight for the Kleenex sitting in my lap and see if she can outcry the girlfriend no one knew he had.

I can't cry. I try to. I want to. I think God is keeping me from crying so everyone can see that I was evil. That I said I wished he would die. I didn't mean it, but I wonder if I killed him. If out of all the wishes I'd spoken, someone got confused and decided to grant an angry outcry as my one come true. I hate myself. I see the tears on every face in the 200-person crowd. I am the only person not crying. I am inhuman.

People keep talking. They keep mourning the loss of the one who would change the world, or maybe just America, or maybe just Broadway, but in any case be a revolutionary. They keep lamenting the tragedy, they keep wishing the family "the best," and they keep crying.

I am sitting here for days on end, constantly reminded of the miracle I've destroyed. In every eye, behind every tear, I'm seeing the glare of hatred. I'm feeling the cold hard stare of accusation. I'm waiting for someone to come arrest me, someone to come tell me I'm due for death in the morning. I'm waiting for Karma to hit me, perhaps a stray hearse or police escort. When I walk out of here, I will be hit head-on and I will feel life ebb out of me as I realize justice has been served.

My sleeves are wet. Out of Kleenex, both of my friends have decided to rest their heads on my shoulders and wipe their tears on my sleeves. I am the rock. I am the shoulder to cry on. I need no comfort, for I am not crying; they feel safe. They think I am stoic. I think I'm afraid.

The people finally stop talking, and in the silence before they start the tape you can hear 199 people sobbing; you can hear 398 tears fall. You hear the echoes of the voices of the people talking about how smart he was, how talented. You hear the remains of statements like, "He played the cello so well," "He had an angel's voice," or "I always enjoyed reading his papers and poems."

The speakers crackle to life and they start to play the recording from last Fall's Talent Show. A pure, clear voice sings Edwin McCain's "I'll Be" from beyond the grave and each pause is punctuated by gasps and sobs. I still can't cry but on either of me I feel tears hitting my arms and hands, and I reach out and hold both of them and try to comfort them. I feel empty, like I've hollowed out every part of me that was once human. Like when he died he took most of me with him.

People are standing and filing out of the auditorium and my friends slowly gather their strength and start to rise. I miraculously

discover a half-gone package of Kleenex in the coat I've been sitting on and I hand it to my best friend, his girlfriend, so that she'll have something at the burial. I'm not going. My mom is waiting for me outside. She thinks that coming to the memorial service is hard enough for me and she will dote on me when I get into the car. I feel sick walking out because I feel like I should be the one in that box. I shouldn't have said it. I am so angry with him for pissing me off when he was going to die three days later. I am so mad at myself for letting him get to me.

In the car on the way home, the radio plays "I'll Be." It's still fairly new; he knew a good song when he heard one. I still can't cry, but I feel it starting to hit me. On the way home I think about the fact that I'll never see his face class again, about the fact that I'll never applaud when he gets yet another cello solo, that I won't get to pretend that I hate him when he and Cathryn tease me for being naïve.

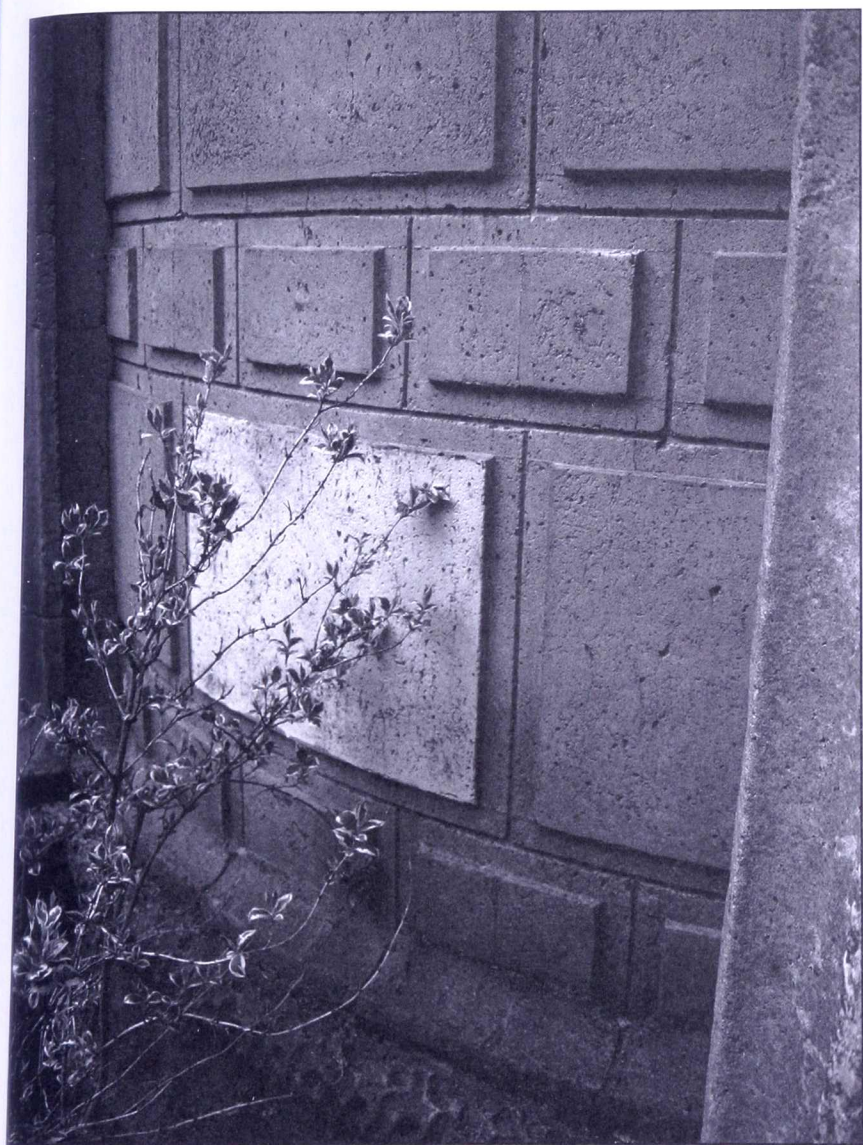
My room is dark and I leave it that way. I lock the door and keep thinking. I get mad at him for being so stupid to try to push that dead tree over; I get mad at the wind that snapped the tree top off. I get angry that he was too far away from the house to let anyone have a chance to save him.

He won't sign my yearbook, and we're not going to be in the same English Honors class next year. I knew that after middle school I'd probably never see him again, but I was kind of looking forward to having him around for 8th grade. I'm so scared for Cathryn. I hope they don't send her back to the institution. I can't get his voice out of my head, and I can't stop myself from singing "I'll Be" as he hits the refrain.

As I start to fall asleep, I move my face away from the salty wet spot on my pillow, and I wish I could take away the last week. I wish to God that there were do-overs.

The In-Between

Emma Estrella



Missing New Orleans

Renae Friedley



American Woman

Anna Alder



Sculpture - Plaster cast with metal, life size

Nica Mendoza



Untitled

Matt Farina



The Other Side

Richard Highnote



Ceramic Shoe

Steve Tette



Untitled

Matt Farina



Broadstreet

Kristin Taylor



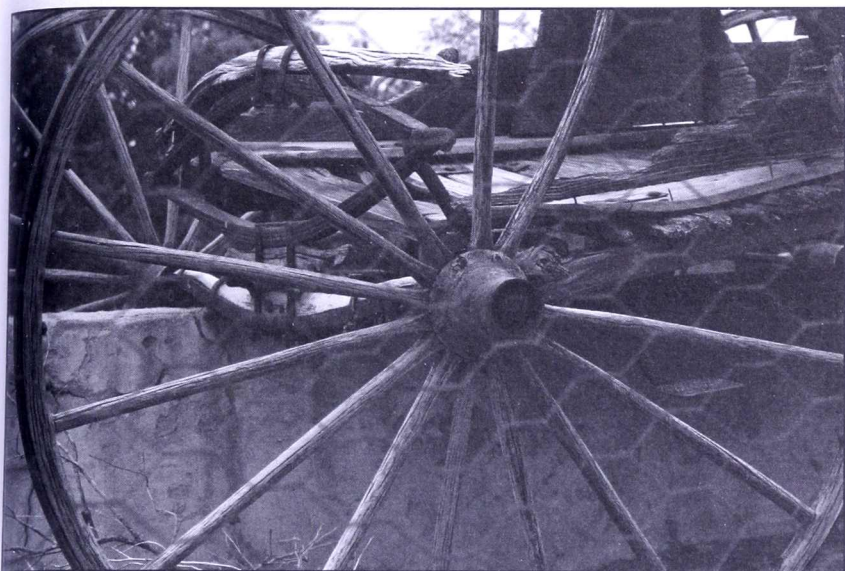
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Matt Farina



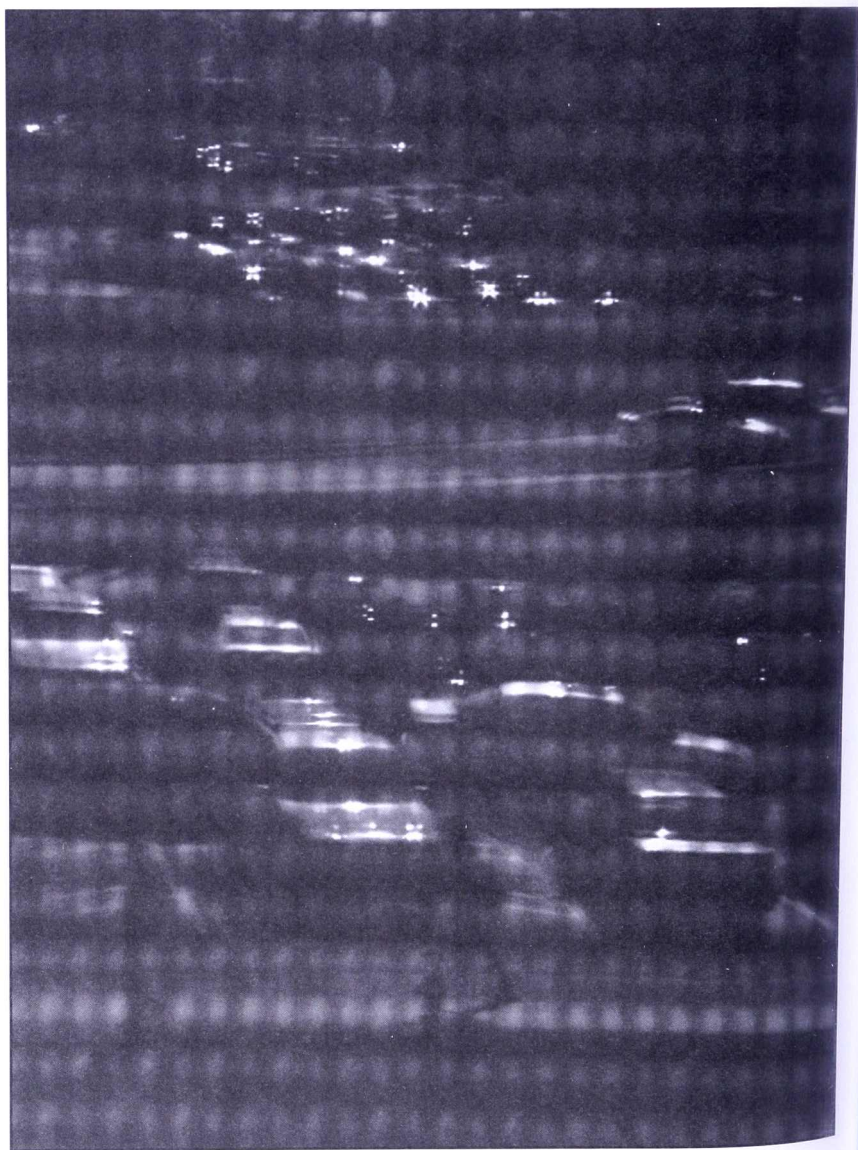
Urban Cowboy

Emma Estrella



Blinded

Richard Highnote



They'll Politely Ask It Out of You

Chris Beyer

My uncle is the king of bright ideas, like the time he watched this documentary¹ and then tried to convince me that by cutting off my left index finger at just the right angle, I could make the insurance company think that it was a work related accident and get them to pay off double. I asked him at the time, "What about me not having a finger?" His response: "Well, it's not like it's your traffic finger, so it'll be fine."

I've discovered that in my family, these sort of things happen a lot, especially to me, and almost always when I'm around my uncle.

My uncle George's always got some scheme cooked up on how to make fast cash, get laid quick, or find cheaper air fair on flights from Milwaukee to Guadalupe, even though he's scared of flying. This is who he is, bright ideas and all.

It's like the time he started a company whose job was to collect owl vomit. I know what your thinking, yes, there actually is a market. The secret behind this gig was that schools and colleges would pay for the animal bones the owls vomit up. It's kinda like going out and collecting soda cans to recycle for the nickel or dime they're worth, just smellier, and even the bums in our city don't want to pick up vomit. But since we will, we just had to go out there, find these piles of stuff that used to be owl food, and collect 'em.

¹ The documentary my uncle watched is called *Vernon, Florida*, created by the documentarian Errol Morris. *Vernon, Florida* is a film chronicling the small town of Vernon just south of the Georgia-Florida border, where in the 1950's and 1960's the inhabitants of this town had a statistically unusually large number of residents requesting insurance money for lost limbs, fingers, toes, whole arms, etc. The conclusion was reached that the locals had taken to intentional self-mutilation as a means of acquiring monetary payouts from their respective insurance companies. This could be seen as extreme behavior; however, in light of the current climate in America consisting of the new American dream being the desire to slip and fall inside the right Wal-Mart, Kohls, or Burlington Coat factory so as to be able to sue the aforementioned company for the settlement money, the behavior of the residents of Vernon, while extreme, seems hardly as bizarre upon closer inspection.

The truth is, it did pay pretty well, but you still smell like owl vomit all day. This gig worked out fine, that is, until my Uncle lost his van, or as he called it, the vomit-mobile. I don't know exactly the specifics of what happened with this, but as he put it, "Well, this guy I know, knows this guy that he owes a favor to, and since I owe him this favor of my own for this thing he did, when I needed something taken care of a while back because of that whole Jimmy situation....uhhh, anyways, so yah I'm gonna need to buy a new car donchakno."

Oh, we're not even Italian if you were wondering. The truth is, when you live in a city like this, have a family like this, and live a life like this, everyone you know is truly a character.

It's like this all over the midwest, in the citys and the small towns. Everyone you know's just a caricature of a Kramer, a House, or a JD².

² For example, just within my close family, my aunt Elaine has the tendency to walk into the house and exclaim, "You wont believe what I just fucking saw. This little fucking kid next door was flipping the bird at his god damn little brother. I just can't believe these kids ya know." Elaine's also prone to fits of profanity on Sunday's when she delivers her inevitable rant about "having to go pick up the god damn communion wafer for Ma because she can't get outta' the house on her own." Then there's Uncle Jerry, the retired 20 year veteran of the Milwaukee Police Department, who will hit on any date you bring to any and all family gatherings. Also, my nephew Johnny, who for whatever reason got kicked out of the family because Grandma thought he was stealing money out of her underwear drawer. Yes, she keeps her money there, and like the kiss of death, in Czech families, if you get kicked out, you're permanently out. In this case, the only family allowed to talk to you after that is your own father. I for one havent spoken to Johnny in upwards of 7 years because of this. And finally, there's Grandma, our Alzheimer's ridden matriarch, she's outlived her husband by twenty years, drinks and cusses like a sailor or Elaine, still refers to black people as "coloreds," and who because of her Alzheimer's has reverted to speaking only in the Czech language, which none of the kids know at all, except for my dad who knows one word, a term of endearment for mother, "babička." This word being, at this point, the only word grandma responds to. Also, the only word the family could use to chastise her when on one occasion, she'd wandered outside to check if the garage door was closed, which it has been for the last 10 years, slipped on some ice, and broke her hip. Babička was the word we had to use in varying degrees of inflection to both console and condemn her for this error.

So amid this backdrop of caricature and culture, I sit here in our family's house in West Allis, this blue collar working class neighborhood of Milwaukee, drinking some of the coffee in the house that's somehow always just been brewed, and eating a piece of danish that's also always somehow just come out of the oven. I should mention that when I say oven, I'm referring to the oven a few blocks down the street at the local Indian-run Honeydip donuts. We only go there because as far as my family's concerned, going anyplace else is a sin, and we absolutely, under no circumstance, are ever supposed to bring home a box of Krispy Kreme or something else that starts with the word Dunkin.

So I'm sitting here drinking my coffee when George comes up to me with yet another of his requests.

He asks me, "You ah, ever ride the bus?"

"Yeah, back and forth from the Eastside mostly," I tell him.

"Yah, so you ever bring a book bag with ya when ya go," he says.

"Sometimes, why?"

"Well, I got this thing."

I should point out, in my family, the word thing, things, or any gerundive of the word, if that's even possible, is never, ever a good thing.

I wait for the inevitable, "this guy" statement.

And there it is.

George says, "Well, I got this guy up on Locust and Oakland, and he's got this thing he needs from me yah, and since that one guy, who still hates me cause of that thing lives around there and wouldn't want to see me, I was wondering if I could get you to do me a favor."

Unfortunately, for me at this moment, I'm required to say yes and this is the real "thing" of the matter for me. The problem with being an American who's just a generation or two off the boat, and still talks about the old country as if it's just next door is this: we're ruled by custom.

Since our family's Czech, Czech custom dictates that when asked to do a favor, you do it. Czechs have a similar thing with food. It's like how the British eat with their fork in their left hand, considering it proper etiquette, Czechs have this thing about offering you food. If your eating something, anything, and there's anyone at all around, you, by obligation, have to offer them some. They, by obligation, have to turn it down the first time, and you still held under this invisible sense of obligation that goes back to some relative of ours who lives in Praha (Prague, for you non-Czechs out there) said so, you have to offer them again, and this time, they have to say yes.

Thanks to this, we as a people, end up saying yes a lot.

I've had four roommates I've hated because of the words, "Hey man, you mind if I stay with you a while?"

I've had 47 terrible meals because different people asked me, "You wanna go to Ma Fisher's?" All of this somehow feels like a pattern of recovery.

It's this sense of obligation. You cant escape it, you cant ignore it, and no matter how you respond to it, somehow, it's always there.

So you should understand why fifteen minutes later, after talking to George, I'm on the number 32 bus heading east on West National Avenue, with a pound of something that looks kind of like powdered sugar in this book bag, on my way to bring it to "some guy" to take care of "some thing."

Heading a little further north on 35th Street there's the inevitable crack head doing a perfectly choreographed version of Michael Jackson's dance from the "Thriller" video directing traffic on the corner of Sherman and North Avenue, and I am heading off to follow up on my obligations even though deep down there's a sense of dread that I'll run into the infamous Icky Vicky3 once I hit the east side and fulfill this most current of obligations.

Still, there's something to be said for custom and familial duty. With a family like this, a city like ours, and all the people you

eventually run into, this is the life I lead, and these are the negatives of it that I realize I'll just have to accept. So as I reach my stop on Locust Avenue, I 3 Icky Vicky is a locally known transvestite prostitute infamous for her seemingly constant presence in the neighborhoods around the Eastside burrough of the city. Vicky is generally seen carrying a container of bear mace and has on numerous occasions sprayed locals in the face with said bear mace. On the occasion one is traversing the Eastside, one will frequently attempt, upon seeing Icky Vicky, to try to quickly flee into the nearest George Webb's, or possibly as mentioned previously in text, Ma Fisher's to seek refuge. Many long hours are spent sitting there much like an actual refugee inside one of these two restaurants, watching her tap on the window of the restaurant, then pointing to you, and then her bear mace, while you wait for her to leave. On some rare occasions you'll be fortunate enough to have one of the employees let you sneak out the back door. don't even question the why or the reason behind me keeping my promise to take care of this "thing" for my uncle, even if I do run into Icky Vicky.

Besides, I wouldn't want to be rude, would I?

Where's Alice?

Renae Friedley



All That Jazz Blues

Joseph Francavilla

I heard it from my bed—
the radio said:
“jazz is dead.”

the all-american, only-american artform
all that jazz done gone
just poofed! from lack of interest
while no one’s lookin’
well, why would they?!

radios don’t play it
discjocks don’t say it
hey, jazz is dead.
dead as a record.

it’s a dead-end trip.
no salt peanuts or misbehavin’,
no miles ahead or A train,
no giant steps ‘round midnight.

red, white, & blue jazz,
hot jazz, swing jazz,
bebop jazz, cool jazz, free jazz . . .
is dead.

born just last century,
of blues & dixie & swing
& black & blue “bad” notes—
is dead.

Satchmo grewed it, Duke dressed it,
Bird hyped and needled it, Diz bopped it,
Monk tore it, Miles cooled it, and Trane—
in his short grace note—
Trane scattered it to Heaven.
we couldn't get it,
us earthbound mortals.
when BirdTranePopsDukeMonkMilesDiz died,
jazz riffed on.

Getz tried to top the charts and bossafy,
Wes lost heart and tried to simplify and prettify,
Miles exploded fusion, tried to electrify,
and son Herbie tried to funkify.

But when complete encyclos
and jazz histos multiply,
you know it's ready to ossify,
and when someone says, whither jazz?
it just can't vivify.
it's let out the last sigh.

now in every peoplestalk
"all that jazz" & "jazz it up" & "it's jazzy"
won't be bopin' in
no mo'

never to hear those down BEATS—
taketa taketa taketa bim bam
taketa bim bam—
makes me blue.
I got the "All That Jazz" blues
and I can't be satisfied.
jazz is died.

died of rock n roll & unreality tv
& the age of screens, screams & sims
& celebsongs & technopap
& synthomuzak & punkpulse
& ETCETERA TERA TERA . . .

so, Jazz, you died real cool.
Jazz, you skipped school, by and by
bye, bye!
don't cry and don't sigh
and don't ask why.

you only live once.
you wasn't no dunce.
it was a great run.
it was a lotta fun.

The Overlook

Jon Sanderson

Through the darkened path heralded by
Branched and barky pillars, there is solace.
I step onto shy green fingers lively
Made by the radiant sphere's glowing caress.

Rightward, fields rolled below, their goldening
Lives extend their reach. A single breath stirs
A great wave, bending each grain and flowing
Each honeyed head to a soft departure.

But the left holds a view as well; pavement
Cheap housing and beat-up red Chevrolets.
The road that led home. I swallow this fact

As I turn to the tree line. Huge oaks bend
To take me back to their leaf-ridden maze;
A bittersweet thought knowing I'd never be back.

Wailing in the Sands of Haiti

Jessica Charles

Distant
Wading
and
Aching.
a gentle giant weeps.
Her hope
drowning.
Preying
within deaths grip.
She bleeds
dust
which pours from her eyes
as her bundle crumbles
into the depths of defeat.
Neglectful.
but to dismay
Engraved
in the grooves of her soul,
a stream of drums
Beating.
Its echo is greater than its cry.
Its heart is stronger than
its will to survive.
Marked.
As the tears soon tire,
the floods of singing
will soon wash her from
the falling earth,
and out back to sea.

After School, Again

John Summerfield

Dead cattails lean over the winded creek
as chatty children ride past with plastic, see-through packs,
the crossing guard soaked
by rain which lasted long enough to make him miserable -
brochures on home study programs litter my passenger seat
where they will stay a week, and
then be put out with the cleaning of the mats
after being glanced over one last time
like a curriculum vita belonging to a middle-aged writing teacher,
and then
the aeroglide fall into the bin -

For the Love of Fog (Golden Gate Bridge)

Emma Estrella



The Raindrops of Language

Bri Neeves

Rain carries several connotations. When some imagine rain, their ears deafen to the booming crashes of night thunder. Others view rain as a minor inconvenience causing them to drive slower, become tardy to work, and apologize timidly to their demanding bosses. Yet some people think of rain as rejuvenation, granting the plants longevity while cleansing the earth of dirt and impurities. The elements behind rain are exactly like the elements behind literature. Just as no rainfall or perception of a rainfall is completely identical, neither is a work of literature or its perception. Good literature can frighten you, astound you, weaken you, anger you, sadden you, confuse you, and humor you all within the same line. It can lift you to new levels of awareness and transfer you to an abyss of pensive thought. Good literature isn't always positive. Sometimes, it may even spark a desire to strangle the book or tear out its pages for use as tissues. In fact, some of the best books I have ever read have been slammed, thrown across the room, or placed thoughtfully to the side before they were finished.

No matter how rainy weather strikes a person, it always inspires something. If you are fearful of it, you are inspired to seek comfort and security. If it causes a confrontation at work, it inspires you to plan ahead and awaken slightly earlier next time. If you consider it rejuvenation, it may inspire you to think, watch it, or even to dance beneath it as it falls. Even if none of this applies to you, I can guarantee you that sometime in your life, rain has inspired you in some way, even if merely to avoid the outdoors or carry an umbrella. Rain doesn't have to be inspiring to inspire; neither does literature. However, good literature should always inspire something, whether it's positive, negative, or indifferent. This may mean change, emotion, or a refreshing perspective on life. Just like rain, literature means whatever you want it to mean.

If you ask several diverse people and cultures about literature, you will experience not only a myriad of reactions, but a myriad of perspectives. Within my lifetime of discussing literature with others, I have exposed myself to a plethora of viewpoints, all astute in their originality and delivery. Various opinions of literature I have received include “drab,” “exciting,” “worthless,” “interesting,” “irrelevant,” “inspiring,” “pretentious,” “ridiculous,” and “passionate.” And I haven’t even asked someone outside of Georgia yet. Good literature, just like rain, is not always widely accepted. In fact, it is often ignored or considered a burden to read. It does not always gain recognition, but it does cause its scarce admirers to recognize its significance for themselves.

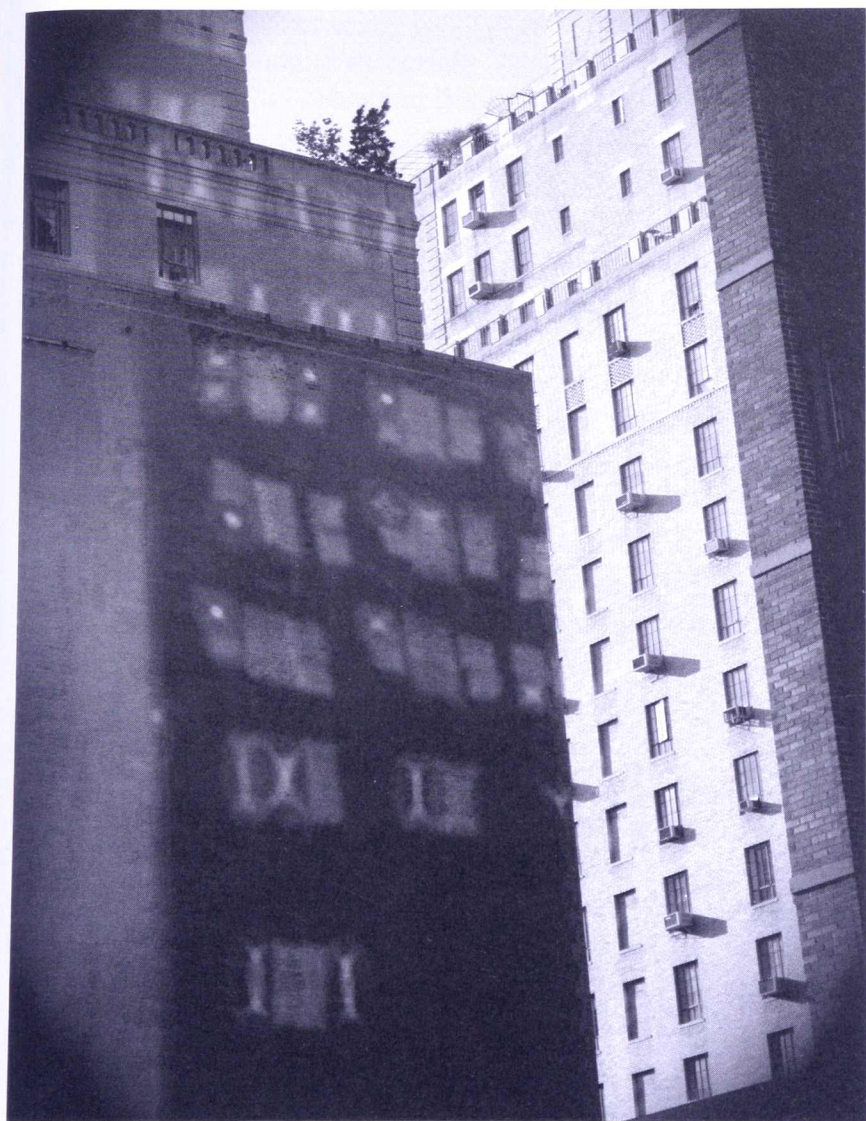
People unreceptive to literature are similar to people unreceptive to rain. They either do not dress appropriately for it or they avoid it at every turn. Not dressing appropriately for rain involves wearing clothes too little or too light. Not dressing appropriately for reading literature involves delving into it with a narrow mind, letting your biases, preconceived notions, and stubborn ideals limit the wide spectrum of interpretations you could consider. Some people may be closed-minded to the individual work, theme, or subject matter (i.e. “sunshine is the only weather people should enjoy”) while others may reject the idea that literature could possess any meaning whatsoever (i.e. “the weather is insignificant and irrelevant to my life”). Both of these attitudes represent a dismissal not just to opposing viewpoints but to the possibility of opposing viewpoints. It is like entering a debate without researching the reasons behind the contrasting side—you are likely to lose the argument or in the case of literature, completely miss out on a world of learning experiences. All types of literature should be explored and only deemed “worthless” if the reader learned absolutely nothing from it.

The definition of “good literature” is much like the definition of a “good” rain. What is a “good” rain? It is when light sprinkles from the sky faintly brush against the rusted pavement? Is it when

its puddles fill the gaps between the grasses like a waterslide? Is it when the warmth of the water contrasts to the wind's fleeting breeze? Is it when its frosted touch craves a taste of simmering hot chocolate? Which is "correct"? None of them. Where is the best work of literature? Nowhere. Thus, whether dissecting Hamlet or Harry Potter, the interpretations of literature greatly exceed the interpreters themselves.

Reflections, NYC

Emma Estrella



Faking It: The Best-Kept Secret of Academia

Kristin Taylor

for academics, especially the human ones

I recently went to my first grownup scholarly conference. That's right; I entered the big leagues, became a big deal, the real thing, et cetera, et cetera ad naseum. Yes, the last weekend of October, I attended the South Central Modern Language Association Convention in Baton Rouge. Now, before I continue, afford me the opportunity to say that I've attended other academic conferences. I'm no stranger to the Sigma Tau Delta Convention, for example, with its hoards of sponsor-led undergraduates parading around like gaggles of high-school girls and its chapter t-shirt sales, containing more puns on the initials STD than I care to recall. I've also had my experiences at writing center conferences, where non-directive is every non-directive other non-directive word. I've even traversed the strange world of conferences on Western literature, where anti-makeup-wearing feminists and seas of clothing made from organic cotton make you question whether these scholars still live on the frontier or just continue to write about it. But despite these experiences, nothing, I don't think, could quite have prepared me for the rite of passage I underwent in Baton Rouge this October – this, of all weekends, Halloween.

As I prepared to go to Baton Rouge, I was a wee bit – how shall I say? – nervous. I knew I was the only conference attendee who wasn't either a graduate student or a professional. When I paid my membership and registration fees, I scrolled down the page, searching for the undergraduate rate, only to find it didn't exist. So I punched in my credit card number and reticently paid the \$23.00 registration fee, half-way expecting a prestigious scholar

with a faux British accent to appear on the screen, looking down at me over the bifocals that would be situated on her long nose, with an expression that would make me call the SCMLA and withdraw my membership – immediately. Instead, I didn't end up breaking the news until the chair of my panel asked for a few lines of biographical information. I sheepishly began responding to her email: "Kristin Taylor will graduate in December with a B.A. in English literature." I laundry-listed a few of my publications, mentioned my future plans to attend graduate school, but mostly I just crossed my fingers. I felt certain they would place some kind of tracer device in my name tag that would warn every other participant of the interloping undergraduate.

As the conference date drew nearer, I packed a suitcase filled with blazers and trouser pants – clothes to, as I put it, at least make me look older. Meanwhile, many of my friends donned their Halloween costumes for pre-holiday parties I only half-way wished I could attend. "Surely there is some irony here," I thought to myself, as I stuffed a hair-straightener into my bag and considered how to use my pantsuit for more, well, suitable purposes than dressing up as Sarah Palin yet again (all for mockery, I might add). But I had yet to discover just how ironic that irony was.

The first night of the conference, I reluctantly attended the SCMLA Social. Now, like any academic, I hate these types of events. I'd rather crawl in my bed and read the world's most boring piece of literary criticism (on syntactical inversions in Derrida, for all I care) anything, anything but being forced to mingle – that awful signifier with its even more dismal signified, a word that, much like Maya Angelou described the word love, "yawns up at you like a volcano." But, I did; I went; I mingled. And, okay, okay, yes, it was good for me. Eventually, I did meet some bright-eyed graduate students with useful advice about the wild blue yonder of higher education, but not before I endured what was quite possibly the most awkward social situation to which I have ever been subjected. Walking along the hotel patio, thinking to myself don't

trip; look confident; by all means, do NOT fall into the pool, I spotted the only person who wasn't already joined by a small group of conference attendees. So I reluctantly approached him, said, "I'm here by myself," and was about to say, "I don't really know how these conference things work," when suddenly he had mistaken my comment as a pickup line and had interrupted my train of thought to say quite matter-of-factly, "Well, I am here with someone." And as if Derrida himself were presenting me with a lesson of just how dismal – and, of course, shifting – the signified of "to mingle" can, indeed, be, at that very moment, his partner walked up. And, yes, they were both professors. And, yes, I was an undergraduate. And, yes, I still wished I was reading about syntactical inversions in Derrida. But, instead, I was there, finding myself extending my hand to the woman. "Hi, I'm Kristin Taylor." I went for a different approach that time, saying, "I'm the only person here from my University." Ah, that worked better. After the initial awkwardness wore off – or perhaps after the couple had imbibed enough complimentary mixers not to care anymore – in lieu of the mixers I didn't drink, the guy offered me a tidbit of complimentary advice: "After awhile, you begin to learn that most people aren't really smarter than you; they've just studied for more years than you have, or they happen to know more about a particular area than you do, but hey, you know more about a particular area than they do. And eventually, you'll write a dissertation, and you'll know more about that one thing than anyone else on the planet, and even if no one reads it, it doesn't really matter; it still makes you feel good. But," he added cockily, "I've had four non-committee members read my dissertation. I feel pretty good about that. But really, if you wanna know, the truth is that you, just like everyone else, will become really good at faking it."

I kept what he said in mind as I attended sessions the next day. One, in particular, enters my thoughts – a session called "Music, Social Constraints, and Cognitive Universals: An Inter-Disciplinary Understanding of Emotions in the Works of Shakespeare," with

its scholastically appropriate title and post-colon subtitle. As I waited for the panel to begin, I watched a rather eccentric professor who was seated on the other side of the room. I looked at him in disbelief as he propped his feet on the chair in front of him and began pontificating, supposedly to his wife, but loudly enough for the rest of us to hear, about the fluidity of norms and mores, maintaining that since his bad manners weren't universally so, per se, one got the sense that the stigma against his propped feet was in flux with changing social customs, and, therefore, when we considered the fact that there were no universal absolutes, his actions were acceptable by all putative standards. I, on the other hand, was struck by just how close the putative standards of "faking it" came, to put it simply, to bullshitting. A scholar truly can rationalize his way into, and out of, anything, but rationalizing one's feet off of a chair was apparently a different matter entirely.

A few minutes later, my attention was distracted by the graduate student who sat at the front of the room, eager to give her paper, a little disconcerted by the fact that the session was scheduled to begin in two minutes, and she was the only presenter who had yet to arrive. In an attempt to fill the time, she began to express her hope that one of the presenters, who had written on the use of music in Shakespeare, would show up. She was really looking forward to his presentation, as she had seen *Romeo and Juliet* performed at The Globe earlier in the summer. She just loved the way the directors of the production had incorporated music. "When music is used well in Shakespeare, it just adds so much to the production," she said. She began trying to recall the other plays performed at The Globe this summer. A moment of silence followed, after which I, who had spent the summer in London, responded, "*Troilus and Cressida*." With three words, with one measly play title, I realized I had bitten the bait; I was expected to play the game. Suddenly, I found that I, too, was faking it, as I listened to my own anticlimactic spasm of words that examined the use of music in *Troilus*. "Haunting," I said, "the alto's voice reso-

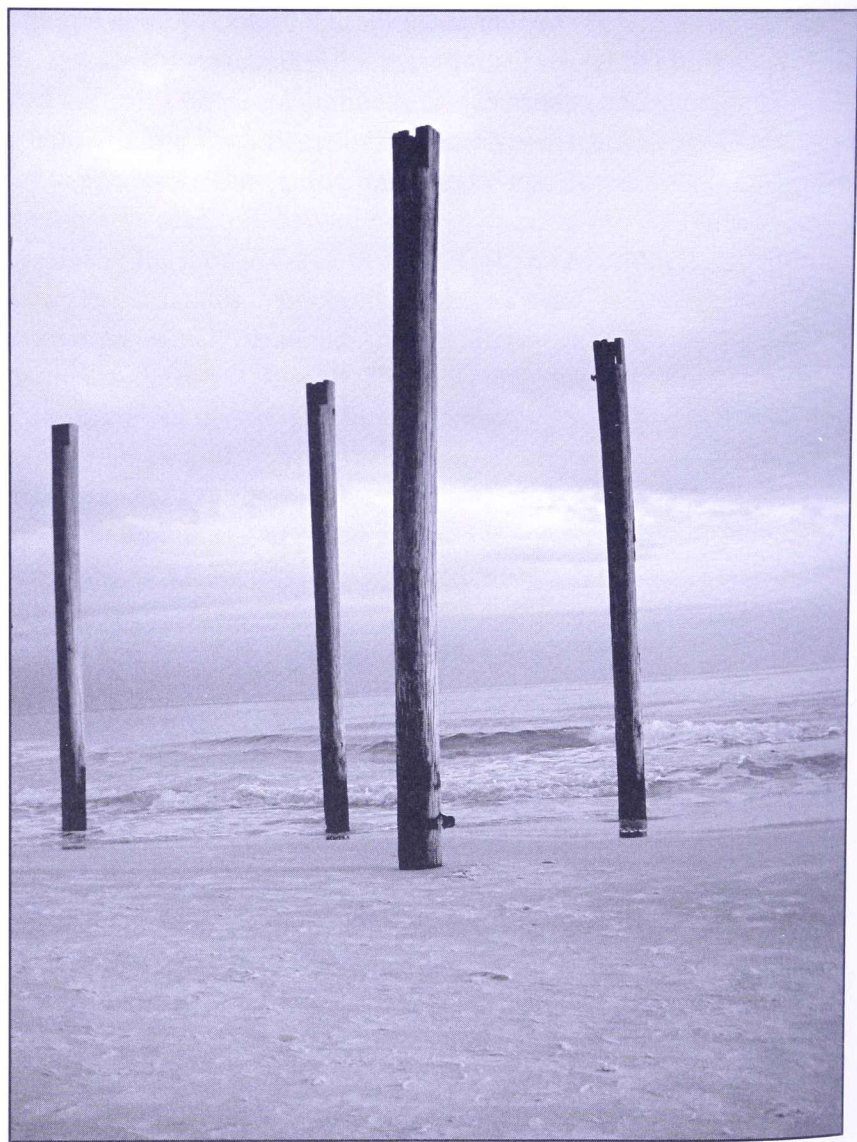
nating throughout the play's tragic, or comic, events (well, tragic or comic, depending on how you look at it – I mean, as you know, critics have yet to decide how the play should really be classified). At any rate, I always find that I'm impressed with the use of music at The Globe." I heard the words coming from my mouth at the same time that my brain was asking itself, "What in the hell are you doing?" Because in all honesty, I've seen two – two – plays at The Globe. I've only read Chaucer's version of Troilus, and as for the literary debates on Shakespeare's portrayal of the ill-fated lovers, I've read, oh, maybe, two sentences about the subject while preparing for the GRE Lit. Subject Test. But I couldn't help myself. The syllables kept coming out like word vomit. And no one even noticed. The graduate student simply responded with a slight twinge of defeat, "Oh, well, I've only seen the one play." There was a moment of self-satisfaction, knowing that I could play the game, that I could survive the cut-throat literary world in which I plan to spend my future. But after that moment passed, it was only disillusionment that lingered. Faking it wasn't the ideal that the professor at the social had suggested. Instead, it created a disconnection between the graduate student and me that disguised itself in the form of a false dichotomy between my adequacy and her inadequacy – neither side of which was true; in reality, we were both more than adequate. I do not intend to imply that I won't conjure the forces of faking it when I need them in the future. Let's face it; I'm headed into the world of graduate school, and I'm not delusional enough – or secure enough, for that matter – to think that faking it can't be an asset at times. But what the entire experience left me with was a poignant and pointed reminder of the quintessential, of why we even do what we do: the collaborative creation of new and meaningful knowledge. Accomplishing that, I realized, requires honesty, requires casting aside the facade and, rather than relying on faking it, calls for relying upon scholarly criticism to illuminate the power of language and of literature.

As I prepared to leave Baton Rouge, I walked through the hotel

lobby, where I saw a couple of high schoolers dressed for Halloween and a grandma, eager for the evening's LSU game, sporting a purple miniskirt up to her ass; I hoped that she, too, was dressed for Halloween, but it didn't seem I could be so hopeful. As for me, I must say, as I got into my car, even though I hadn't joined any of my friends for Halloween festivities, setting aside my blazer felt a little like taking off a costume, like shedding a second skin. As I began the drive home, I was contented to crawl back into my own skin, reminded of who I am, where I am going, and most importantly, of why.

The Sunset Hour

Emma Estrella



Cinnabons at Midnight

Kevin Ramirez

The man and the woman sat side by side outside of gate C-35 in an airport terminal that they weren't supposed to be in. The woman held a blanket over her head and tightly around her shoulders. The man, who was leaning back in his chair with his legs stretched out before him, thought that she looked like an Eskimo. The man brought his hands to his face and pulled his cheeks downward with his palms.

He asked the woman if she was feeling any better.

She nodded.

He looked at the crowd that filled up the waiting area. The couple who had been sitting in the row to the right of him on their former plane was now sitting by the gate desk. They had been arguing in barking whispers right before the lights of the cabin had flickered ominously. The mother and child who had been sitting behind him were sitting on the floor. The child was still crying, its voice muffled by the mother pressing its face into her chest. Off in the distance, the man heard the rattling of some kind of cart approaching.

The man said that that had been some crazy turbulence.

The woman nodded, mumbled yeah.

He said that he had never experienced turbulence that bad before.

The woman said that she thought that the plane was going to fall apart, that maybe the wings would rip right off and everyone would be sucked out into the sky.

The man thought about this. In his mind, he recalled how quickly the clouds outside the tiny window had darkened. Then he thought that maybe the white cotton clouds that everyone had been so used to seeing weren't real, that maybe the real clouds had always been black and hidden away, that maybe the plane's path

was always meant to take them into the dark. This thought was sobering. He remembered how violently the cabin had shaken, how the wings looked like Styrofoam bending in the wind.

She asked him what they were going to do now.

The man glanced at her for a moment, then shrugged his shoulders.

The rattling sound was three paramedics hurrying with a gurney. An old man sitting off to the side of the crowd waved them over. He sat leaning forward with his hands gripping his knees, his head hanging low so that his ears were level with his jutting shoulders. The paramedics surrounded the man—one sat next to him, one squatted in front of him, the other stood by the gurney with her arms folded—and they talked amongst themselves. After a few minutes, the one standing opened a defibrillator box on the gurney and powered it up. She slipped on a pair of gloves. The man turned away and looked back at the woman. She was still sitting in the same, rigid position.

He asked her if she was okay.

She nodded.

He asked her what was wrong.

She said that their plane almost crashed, did he want her to be turning cartwheels.

The man let this go. There was a strange collective moaning from the crowd of people from his plane. The man looked out the window. In the darkness, he could see people swarming, moving all around the former airplane. He tried to recall which city the captain had said they were in, but he couldn't.

The man asked the woman if she was hungry.

The woman shook her head.

He asked her what was wrong again.

She sighed and squeezed the bridge of her nose with her thumb and index finger.

He asked her what was wrong again and swore under his breath.

She turned toward him and asked him in a whisper why he didn't help her with her oxygen mask.

She didn't look at him as she asked this.

The man said that he didn't know what she was talking about, that he did help her.

Not before you had yours on, though, she said.

Before she turned away, he saw that her eyes were narrowed and shimmering. The man stuttered.

The stewardess said to make sure your own mask is on before you help anyone else, he said.

No, she said, whipping her face back toward his and pointing her finger under his chin. No, that's for strangers. That's for people who don't know each other or who aren't sitting next to the person they love. That's not for fucking newlyweds!

The man moved her hand and told her to watch her mouth.

She called the man selfish.

The man said that there was nothing wrong with her mask, that she should have been able to do it herself. He said that a kid could do it, that all she had to do was put the shit over her face and pull the straps.

He immediately regretted swearing at her.

She asked him what he would have done if the plane had actually crashed.

He looked back toward the old man. The paramedics had now gotten him onto the gurney. After collecting his things, they wheeled the old man away. The man didn't look back to the woman until the old man was completely out of sight.

The woman said the man's name.

He said that the plane didn't crash.

She asked what he would have done if the plane had crashed.

He said that it didn't crash.

I could have died, she yelled.

The man asked her why she always had to find fault in him with everything.

The woman swore at him, then turned away from him. He was tired and the woman was making him sleepy.

Could you live with yourself if I died because you were too concerned with yourself, she asked over her shoulder.

He looked at her and tried to tell her with his eyes to stop talking.

What if I died, she asked.

He asked her if she was hungry.

I feel like dying right now, she said, like I could just go invisible and float away.

He told her to be quiet.

He said this in a soft voice and he kept his teeth together when he spoke.

The man wandered the terminal. On occasion, he looked down at his wedding band, still foreign on his finger. A janitor, graying and hunch-backed, slowly pushed a floor buffer across the linoleum. The janitor's half-lidded eyes seemed to be locked on some invisible line along the floor in front of him. The janitor followed this line. Nothing else mattered. The janitor didn't look at the man. The janitor was a statue, loveless and antiqued. The man watched him as he walked for a little while, then he looked away. He saw a person here or there, sleeping in the seats of the various gates. The seats were blue-gray tombstones, leather in place of marble, sewed geometric patterns in place of etched memoria. He saw a couple, the woman's swan neck curled hard left, her head unmoving on the man's shoulder and his head at rest against hers. He saw a man stretched straight across four seats, his hands limp across his stomach, his tie hanging from the side of his chest like a boneless arm. He saw one woman sitting hunched forward, her head, dead-weight, drifting toward her breasts, then pulling back up with a flicker of life. They had been asleep for years, decades, centuries, as if the heaviness of the midnight terminal had left them frozen and comatose. These people who peppered the terminal scared him with their stillness and solitude. The man seemed to make no

sounds as he walked. He found himself over-compensating the weight of his steps until he was able make out the faint taps of his heels against the tiles.

The man suddenly became aware of himself in the pale of the terminal. He felt like he just had to. He quickened his pace, but that wasn't enough, so he jogged and that wasn't enough, so he sprinted. Stores all around him were closed off by metal fences and darkened by shadows. The man felt like there had to be some stores around that were still open during the late hours. The sign up ahead was dim, almost black, and he slowed as he approached it. He stopped five feet from the fence, then he walked forward and brought his hand to the metal. Flickering fluorescent lit up the fence links. He stuck his arm through a space of the fence and reached for the counter. He couldn't get past his elbow. He withdrew his arm and, as he rested his forehead against the metal fence, alone in all directions, the man became suddenly and viciously afraid. The janitor's floor buffer moaned from somewhere far behind him in the hollow airport. He drew in a deep, shaky breath of the air behind the fence. The smell of cinnamon and day-old frosting clogged his nose.

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